NEW

Discover how man's best friend has shaped rural living

# COUNTRY LIFE DOGS

***Inside:***
The most iconic country canines

## TERRIERS

**Find out why these tenacious trackers have won celebrity hearts**

## PLUS

- The history behind bloodhounds
- Don't underestimate the basset
- How to buy the right dog for you

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SPANIELS ✣ POODLES ✣ SETTERS ✣ POINTERS ✣ CORGIS & MORE

Welcome to

# COUNTRY LIFE

# DOGS

A spaniel rustling around in the undergrowth. A Gordon setter gliding over a rain-soaked hilltop. An expectant labrador leaning against your leg awaiting your next command. Whatever the breed, dogs have totally transformed the way we live, and nowhere more so than in the countryside.

In COUNTRY LIFE: Dogs we pay homage to our loving, loyal and often mischievous canine companions. Ranging from loping bloodhounds and doe-eyed bassets to cuddly corgis and tenacious terriers, the conquerors of Britain, welcome to a world of wellies, wet noses and a love that has bonded two species for millennia. 🐾

*Getty Images*

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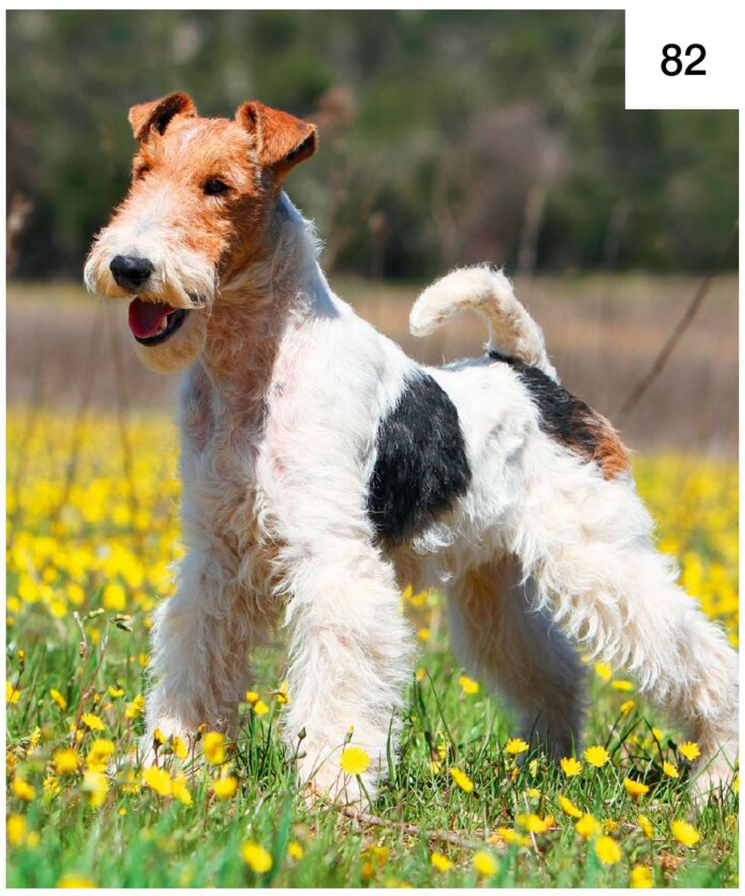

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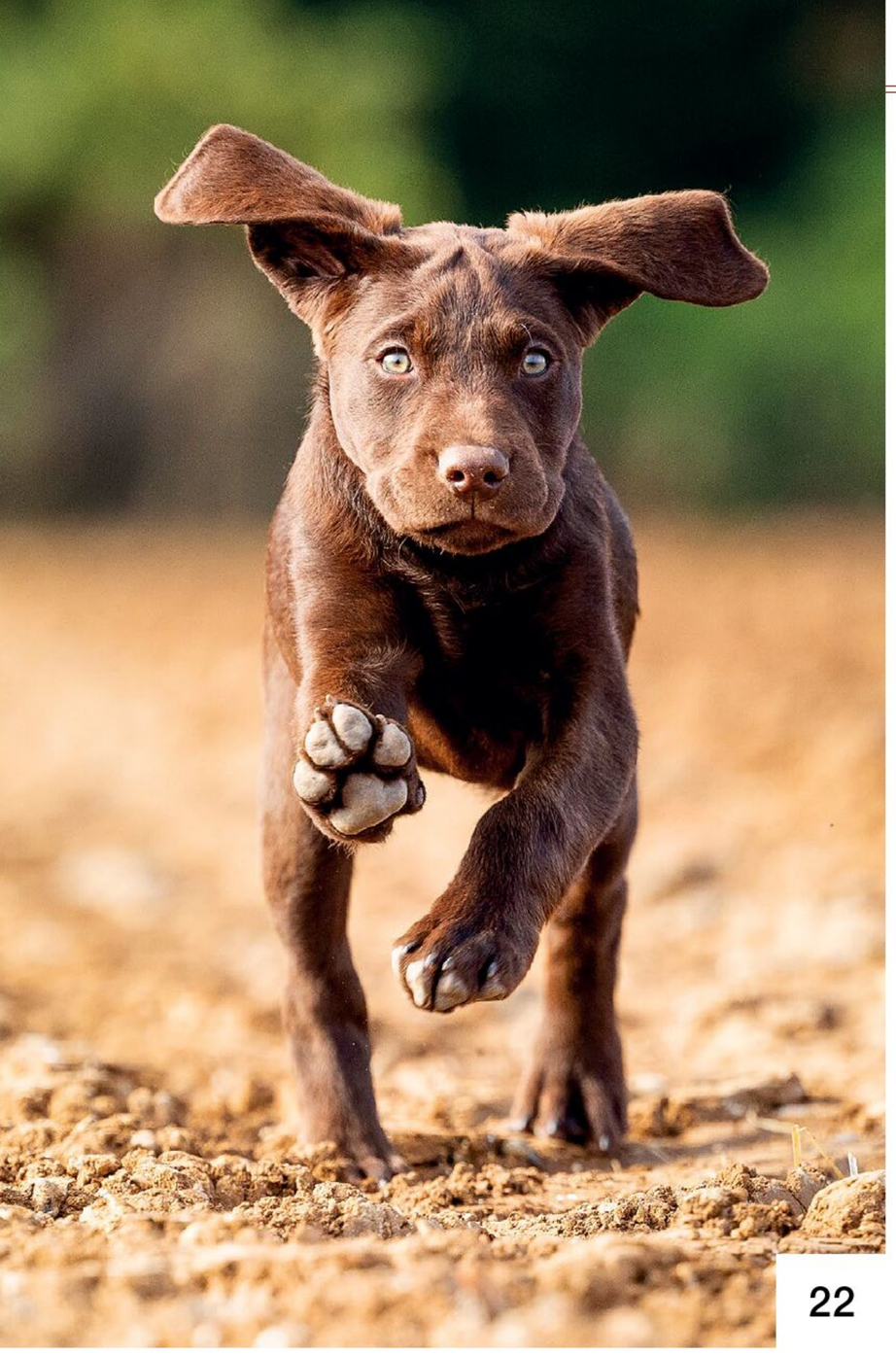

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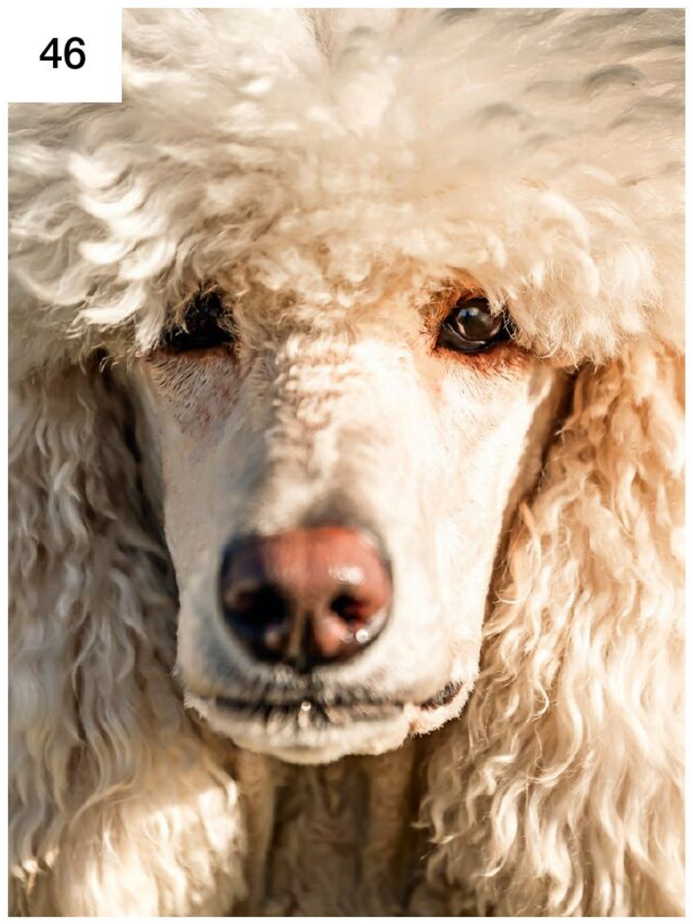

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*Milly Pilkington, Sarah Farnsworth, Alamy, Getty, Steve Magennis, AnimalPhotography.com/Sally Anne Thompson*

# The march of the tartan terriers

Scotland boasts five famously distinctive terrier breeds, all loyal, intelligent and amusing. **Kate Green** celebrates their heritage and appealing characters

*Preceding pages:* **Alice, Hugo and their daughter, Elsie, in the grounds of Whatley Manor.**
*Above:* **The well-travelled trio with their owner, event rider and hotelier Christian Landolt**

## Skye terriers

Christian Landolt, a Swiss event rider, Olympic judge and hotelier, was after 'something hairy' when he travelled to Crufts in 2007 to seek inspiration for a dog to com-plement a menagerie that already included a Shetland pony, a lamb and a Leonberger (German mountain dog). The unmistakable silhouette of a Skye terrier already rang a bell; a telephone call to his grandmother confirmed that his great-grandfather, the renowned animal sculptor Edouard Marcel Sandoz, had owned three.

> 'Skyes are really quite trainable, but they have an opinion, they chase things and they're very comical'

Mr Landolt immediately contacted the Skye Terrier Club (www.skyeterrierclub.org.uk), but it was a six-month wait for a puppy, Alice. 'They're very difficult to find—you have to be patient,' he advises. Alice's husband, Hugo, a dog with a rippling, smoky-silvery coat, was found in Finland. With their daughter, Elsie, they enjoy roaming the 12-acre gardens of Whatley Manor Hotel in the Cotswolds and the Swiss Alps, where Mr Landolt has a mountain home in Gstaad; they're sophisticated flyers and they adore snow.

Skyes are the oldest of the Scottish terriers and have a romantic history, which suggests that their ancestors survived the shipwreck of a Spanish Armada man-of-war off the Scottish coast. Mary, Queen of Scots was reputedly comforted by one at her execution and everyone knows the mournful legend of Greyfriars Bobby. In 2013, Alice was immortalised, with her brother, Donald, in a sculpture at Armadale Castle on Skye, where a Lady Macdonald from centuries ago kept a kennel of these doorstopper-shaped dogs with silky ears.

Confusingly, the Skye looks nothing like a terrier; it's much bigger—a long, low-slung, basset-shaped dog more akin to the Swedish Vallhund and corgi, with which they may be connected; the fact that there's even a Skye obedience group called The Draught Excluders says it all. However, they were bred to hunt vermin in the Western Isles and, points out Mr Landolt, they do show terrier characteristics: 'They're really quite trainable, but they have an opinion, they chase things and they're very comical.'

Perhaps it's their size and hairiness that goes against them, because these amusing dogs with their kindly, intelligent faces and cuddly, uplifting persona are mystifyingly rare—the Skye is on the Kennel Club's vulnerable list with only 59 puppy registrations in 2019 and a paltry 16 in the first half of 2020. Next month, Mr Landolt is helping launch the Skye Terrier International Asso-ciation to encourage discussion on health issues and training between countries that don't have a breed club.

## Scotties

The sturdy Scottish (or Aberdeen) terrier is perhaps the most distinctive of the five breeds, beloved of shortbread-tin and hand-bag designers, American presidents (F. D. Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower and George W. Bush), royalty (James Vl and Queen Victoria), Hollywood royalty (Humphrey Bogart, Bette Davis), writers (Rudyard Kipling) and Monopoly players.

As are all terriers, they're assertive—the breed standard describes them as 'dignified, independent and reserved', as well as loyal, courageous and highly intelligent—and were bred to hunt foxes, badgers and rats. The American Kennel Club goes so far as to describe the Scottie's keen expression as 'varminty'—a pack owned by the 1st Earl of Dumbarton in the 17th century was known as The Diehards (the Earl later named his regiment after them).

A parade of 41 Scotties made an enchanting sight at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, but numbers have dropped dramatically. However, having been put on the Kennel Club's At Watch list last year, the Scottie was the 'top riser' in the annual puppy-registration statistics this spring, showing a 92% increase with 256 puppies, and is no longer at risk of dying out.

Til Tovey, chairman of the Scottish Terrier Club of England (www.stcengland.co.uk), reports a glut of enquiries during lockdown and hopes that, now that breeders are able to travel, there will be puppies available this autumn. She has two, Champion Trackside Flying Scotsman at Charmic ('JJ') and his daughter, Scotsman's Girl ('Girly'), and says that Scottie advantages include them usually being welcome at hotels and being good guard dogs ('they only bark when they need to'). Caveats are that their coats need

**Properly tough: the loyal Scottie**

**‘We’re in control’: Mustard, a Cairn terrier, and Chutney, a Cairn-Westie cross, and (*below*) with owners Bill and Alice Dent**

*Sarah Farnsworth/CLPL; Fiona Osbaldstone; Andrew Sydenham/CLPL; Lachlan Stewart; Ian Rutherford*

care and they’re quite likely to disappear down a rabbit hole. Mrs Tovey adds: ‘I love them for their bold, independent character, but I urge people to only buy them from a registered breeder.’

## Cairns

Mustard, a lightning-quick, nearly black Cairn terrier, and Chutney, a beautifully marked, silvery Cairn-Westie cross, are clearly the most important residents at Bill and Alice Dent’s west Berkshire home and they show all the typical independence of the breed, which was named for its ability to squeeze into a cairn and bolt a fox or otter.

Mrs Dent was in Newbury High Street when she spotted ‘a Chutney’ trotting confidently along and, on asking the owner where she had found her appealing little dog, was directed to an advertisement in a pet shop and thence to a back street in Newbury, where there was a litter of puppies with a Westie mother and a Cairn father. ‘From the day she arrived she was part of the family and completely in control of us,’ admits Mrs Dent. ‘She’s like a nanny. If you get left behind on a walk, she will come and herd you.’

Chutney was such a success that Mrs Dent began the hunt for another Cairn. Mustard, found in Monmouthshire, was the children’s Christmas present. ‘She’s completely eccentric: she sits on the back of the sofa like a parrot and hides in the cushions.’

The hardy, hairy terrier, with its attractive brindled colour schemes, pert triangular ears and alert, merry outlook, is described in the book *Our Friend, the Cairn* (1932) as ‘perhaps the most compact canine parcel of all the doggy virtues ever seen’—and by the breed club as ‘the best little pal in the world’ (www.thecairnterrierclub.co.uk).

It’s surprising, therefore, that the lovable Cairn terrier has undergone such a worrying decline over the past 10 years, although the 232 puppies that have been registered with the Kennel Club so far this year represent a 58% year-on-year increase. ➤

**'I'm coming, too': Nostie the Westie bags her place in Lachie Stewart's vintage car Jamie**

## Westies

West Highland White terriers have been in the life of Scottish architect Lachie Stewart since he was 10, when his parents acquired the pedigree Heather Bell. The present jolly incumbent is five-year-old Nostie, immortalised in Christmas decorations and a series of 'Nostie goes to Venice' illustrations created to mitigate an expensive veterinary bill after she was run over. However, it seems that the resultant hip full of titanium hasn't stopped her chasing seagulls—including over the side of a boat—and thoroughly enjoying every family outing.

'It's extraordinary how they're all so similar in their mannerisms—there are certain things that they all do,' says Mr Stewart, a co-founder with his wife, Annie, of the Ross-shire design company ANTA.

'It's the way they look at you, their pricked ears, their smiley demeanour, the little skip in their walk and the way their head goes on one side when you say a particular combination of words.

> 'Nostie likes to look out of the window in the car, she always knows when a bath is imminent and disappears and, when she's excited, she does a grand-prix circuit of the house'

'Nostie likes to look out of the window in the car, she always knows when a bath is imminent and disappears and, when she's excited about an outing, she does a grand-prix circuit of the house.'

The West Highland White terrier has the healthiest population of the Scottish five, with 824 puppies registered in the first half of this year and 1,556 in 2019. A smiley-faced Westie with an impossibly snowy coat is the face of Cesar dog food, but the breed has a tougher history. Some hunting men thought the white colour signified cowardice, but this was firmly disproved in the 19th century by the 8th Duke of Argyll—the breed was once known as the Roseneath terrier after his estate—and his contemporary, the 16th laird of Poltalloch, who wanted a white terrier that showed up in the heather and couldn't be mistaken for a fox and shot.

## Dandie Dinmonts

Bowhill, the Selkirk seat of the 10th Duke of Buccleuch, has long been of totemic import-ance to Dandie Dinmont enthusiasts. It was here that a gamekeeper rescued Old Pepper, from whom all other Dandies are thought to descend, from a poacher's trap. The estate, where there's a Gainsborough portrait of the 3rd Duke nursing a Dandie-like terrier, has become a Mecca for owners of these sausage-shaped little dogs, distinctive for their bouffant topknots and soulful eyes (www.ddtc.co.uk or www.caledoniandandies.com).

'We love hosting them at Bowhill and seeing packs of them arrive in front of the house,' attests the Duke. 'We had about 50 of them here for the bicentenary of *Guy Mannering*.' The Scott novel, published anonymously in 1815, has a character called Dandie Dinmont, a farmer who owns a pack of small dogs, all called either Pepper or Mustard.

Thanks to Scott, who kept and bred the dogs himself, Dandie Dinmonts became madly fashionable; Queen Victoria, Sir Edwin Landseer and William Wordsworth were devotees, as were, later, Somerset Maugham, George Bernard Shaw, Gerald Durrell, Karen Blixen, Agatha Christie and Sir Alec Guinness. They've had a tobacco, a whisky blend and a Clyde paddle steamer named after them and they're the only dog breed allowed to wear a clan tartan (Scott's).

The Duchess of Buccleuch, a goddaughter of Dame Jean Maxwell-Scott (the last direct descendant of Scott to live in his Abbotsford home), is patron of the breed club. The Duke admits to being more of a spaniel or labrador man himself, but reveals: 'We have a wonderful caretaker, Calum Flanders, who is passionate about Dandie Dinmonts and has two. They're enchanting little dogs with great character, full of spark and life.'

The Dandie was the subject of the first book about a single breed (*The Dandie Dinmont Terrier, its History and Characteristics, 1885*), but, sadly, it's now listed as vulnerable by the Kennel Club, with only 109 puppy registrations in 2019. 🐾

**The Duke of Buccleuch with Bowhill Lucy in front of a Gainsborough portrait of his ancestor, also with a Dandie Dinmont**

# It ain't nothing but a wolfhound

Mythical and magnificent, yet gentle and intensely loyal, the Irish wolfhound can only be described in superlatives, finds **Flora Watkins**

Photographs by Millie Pilkington and Sarah Farnsworth

AN early 19th-century painting of an Irish wolfhound by the artist Reinagle shows the dog 'looking back over his shoulder into the past'. It's an arresting image and one with which devotees are familiar, for myths and legends swirl around this dog's origins, like many ancient sites.

It was moving to a 16th-century house near Stonehenge that sparked Trudie Styler's love affair with the breed in the early 1990s. Something about the place itself inspired her husband, she recalls. 'Sting just said to me "I'd like to buy a wolfhound. I think you'd enjoy having your own dog and this house sort of looks like it should be for wolfhounds".'

The family acquired two puppies, Gideon and Finbarr, who immediately 'seemed to fit not just Lake House, but into our lives—so loyal and kind around children, so loyal to me; the ideal dog for this lovely place'.

Although Gideon lived to a good age, Finn 'didn't go on as long'—wolfhounds, sadly, only tend to live for 6–10 years—and the experience prompted Miss Styler to found her Dukesarum kennel, committed to breeding for health and longevity. 'Lake House was built in 1578 by a man called George Duke and Old Sarum was an Iron Age hill fort, the site of the old settlement, north of Salisbury,' she explains. Putting Duke and Sarum together gave her the perfect prefix for 'these majestic dogs'.

> 'Sting just said to me "I'd like to buy a wolfhound",'

When I visit, there are 11 Dukesarum wolfhounds in residence, including Cainagh and Winston, 'our house dogs', a handsome young hound called Atticus—'the second love of my life,' his mistress laughs—and four 13-week-old puppies, with coltish long legs and endearingly huge paws.

'It's tremendous going for walks up the old drover's road towards Stonehenge when there are seven or eight at a time,' muses Miss Styler. 'They can really gallop up there on that large stretch of land; they're in their element. It's like a sight from a different century.'

If it isn't hard to imagine Uther Pendragon walking among the Dukesarum wolfhounds on Salisbury Plain, that's because the breed, in some form, dates from well ➤

**Trudie Styler at home with six Irish wolfhounds from her Dukesarum kennel. She often walks eight dogs at a time**

**Sit!: At 10 months, Marmaduke (facing page, with two-year-old Camilla Rolfe) already stands 36in at the shoulder, but he is always ready for a rest at his Penton Park, Hampshire, home (above)**

before the time of the Arthurian legends. Hilary Jupp, a retired breeder who's researched the Irish wolfhound for 40 years, says that, although 'the name is quite a recent one, the hound itself goes back far into the mists of time'.

There are mentions of the *cú*—translated, variously, as wolf dog or Irish hound—in Irish laws pre-dating Christianity. Only kings and the nobility were allowed to own the great Irish hound, which was used to hunt wolves and deer, to protect herds and went into battle alongside its master. Tales abound of the *Fianna* and their greatest chief, Fionn mac Cumhall, hunting and fighting with their colossal hounds.

However, Mrs Jupp cautions that some of the stories about wolfhounds—such as that of Gelert, slain by his master, Prince Llewellyn of Wales, in the mistaken belief he had killed his infant son (Gelert had killed a wolf threatening the baby)—seem, sadly, 'to have been made up completely'.

After the last wolf was killed in Ireland in the 18th century, the breed came close to dying out and it fell to two Victorian Scots to revive it: Maj Richardson lived in Dublin and Capt Graham began breeding in Gloucestershire, outcrossing with Scottish deerhounds. The first modern Irish wolfhounds were registered with the English Kennel Club in 1886.

The breed continued to be a favourite of the aristocracy: that great sporting Diana, Elizabeth, Empress of Austria, who travelled to Ireland and Leicestershire for the hunting, had a brace of Irish wolfhounds: Shadow and Plato.

> 'After the last wolf was killed in Ireland, the breed came close to dying out'

A source of great pride for the Irish, the wolfhound features in the emblem of the national bank, founded by Daniel O'Connell, and the breed has been sought out by wealthy Americans with Irish ancestry. The film director John Huston kept them and John F. Kennedy, perhaps with his own Camelot in mind, had one at the White House.

Today, the Irish wolfhound is no longer the preserve of the aristocracy and is prized as a family pet rather than a hunter, but owners do need sizeable grounds. Danielle Rolfe and her husband, Guy, bought their first wolfhound, Montgomery, when they moved to Penton Park at Penton Mewsey in Hampshire. Once the country seat of William Cubitt, when he was Lord Mayor of London, it's now owned by Mr Rolfe's parents and run by the family as a wedding venue.

'No breeder will let you buy a wolfhound without being checked. My uncle, who is on his fourth, originally had to submit aerial photos,' Mrs Rolfe discloses—these were to satisfy the breeder that the dog had sufficient space. Monty proved to be the archetypal 'gentle giant' with the couple's three little girls. 'When they were babies, all of my children used to lie on him to drink their bottles,' she continues. 'They're very conscious of their pack; when I used to take the twins out in the double buggy, Monty would place himself between the girls and the friend we had gone to see.'

It was heartbreaking, then, when Monty had to be put to sleep, aged just six, due to cancer. A neighbour put the Rolfes in touch with the Dukesarum kennel and Miss Styler's breeder, Glenys Gwilliam. Once they had been approved—for Mrs Gwilliam, the people are as important as the place as wolfhounds are 'soulful dogs and crave that interaction with humans more than anything else'—Marmaduke joined the household.

At the age of 10 months, he already stands 36in at the shoulder and, although still very puppyish, he's displaying the breed's ➤

*Above:* **Marmaduke and six-year-old Elizabeth Rolfe enjoy tea at their home.** *Facing page:* **Miss Styler stands tall with two of her Dukesarum wolfhounds, Atticus and Scout**

tratis and temperament, following two-year-old Camilla around the garden.

'However, the minute a wedding cake comes into the house, we're on lockdown,' Mrs Rolfe adds hastily. 'He will go and find what he's not allowed.' To date, this has included a roast chicken, a whole Brie, several pats of butter and a sofa. Monty once wolfed down a delivery of scallops and king prawns, that had been ordered from a Chelsea fishmonger for a family barbecue.

> 'Marmaduke's bowl is the size of a horse's feed bucket'

Space is essential for an Irish wolfhound, because, when you're as tall as a Shetland pony and the kitchen table is at shoulder height, all your accoutrements are Brobdingnagian. Marmaduke's bowl is the size of a horse's feed bucket and, instead of a stick, he helps himself to the contents of the log basket. He also refuses to get into the back of the family's Discovery, much in the way that some big horses won't load into a trailer.

Despite this, Maura Lyons, a molecular geneticist who is heavily involved with efforts to improve the health of the breed, manages to keep three wolfhounds at her two-bedroom cottage in Angus—although she reveals that 'we don't mind sharing our sofas' and 'Florrie gets into bed with us'.

Florrie, along with Myrtle and Dahlia, is also 'fond of gardening', regularly working to excavate some 'spectacular holes'—think *The Great Escape*.

'They need exercise, like any other dog, but they're not high-energy, like spaniels and labradors,' Dr Lyons continues. As with other sighthounds, 'they'll take a bit of exercise, then like to take it easy'.

She speaks warmly of Miss Styler's efforts, as patron of the Irish Wolfhound Health Group, to try to reduce the heart problems and osteosarcoma that can affect the breed.

Miss Styler often hosts fundraisers and regular heart testing at Lake House, and there's a bone-cancer research project running with Nottingham Vet School. If problems can be identified early, Dr Lyons explains, 'then owners know that you don't breed from that dog'.

The Irish wolfhound has graced these isles for thousands of years. Thanks to the efforts of Miss Styler and fellow passionate advocates, the wolfhound is looking to the future, as well as the past. 🐾

## Dances with wolves...

• An Irish wolfhound is the regimental mascot for the Irish Guards—it's currently a five-year-old dog called Domhnall (*'My regiment and other animals', February 11, 2015*)—and 'The Fighting 69th' (1st Battalion, 69th Infantry), one of the most decorated units in the US Army. The 69th's wolfhounds are the only animals permitted in the St Patrick's Day parade on Fifth Avenue in New York.

**• Artist Cecil Aldin repeatedly painted his wolfhound, Micky, alongside Cracker the bull terrier in the charming book *Sleeping Partners*.**

• Other famous owners have included the actor Rudolph Valentino, who left a dog valued at $5,000 (£3,735) when he died in 1926, and the novelist Georgette Heyer, whose bitch, Misty Dawn, stood 33½in at the shoulder.

**• Many think Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had an Irish wolfhound in mind for *The Hound of the Baskervilles*—'a great black beast, shaped like a hound, yet larger than any hound that ever mortal eye has rested upon'—but, as Ruth Rendell has noted, the illustration by Sidney Paget for *The Strand Magazine* (and on the wall at Baker Street Tube station) actually looks more like a German shepherd.**

# ‘Such smashing little dogs’

They’re not as well known as their Pembroke cousins that were so beloved by Elizabeth II, but Cardigan Welsh corgis are small dogs with a big attitude, finds **Matthew Dennison**

VISITORS to the epilepsy ward of one British hospital may find themselves in for a surprise. Among regular attendees at the clinic is a Cardigan Welsh corgi called Bella. As an assistance dog, she combines the roles of faithful companion and early warning device for her epileptic owner. Indeed, so acute is Bella’s sensitivity to her handler’s health that she’s able to give her a 30-minute warning of a seizure.

> ‘Cardigans have an ability to empathise. They’re quick learners and very intelligent’

To Bella’s breeder, Brenda Piears, the dog’s prowess is easily explained. ‘Cardigans have an ability to empathise,’ she divulges. ‘They’re quick learners and very intelligent.’

They are also, as anyone who has ever seen one will vouch, handsome little dogs, sturdily four square on their short legs, with a long back and a tail like a fox’s brush, usually tipped with white. Their double coat shows a variety of colourings, from the ➤

**Fit for a fairy queen: with melting dark eyes and handsome ‘saddle’ markings, Cardigan corgis are as appealing to us now as they were to the fairies of legend**

**Diminutive, yet never daunted: breeder Karen Hewitt's Cardigan corgis relish long walks, but are equally happy curled up**

red more often associated with their cousins, Pembroke corgis—the favourite pet of the late Queen Elizabeth II—to sable, brindle and blue merle, the colour that Mrs Piears chiefly breeds and shows.

Cardigans' coats are liberally marked with white, including a distinctive white blaze on the head and often on the neck, chest and legs.

However, the striking good looks, intelligence and small size that make them ideally suited to being a modern pet have done little to popularise this native breed, one of the oldest in the British Isles. Although the Cardigan Welsh corgi enjoys a healthy following overseas, especially in the USA, at home, it's among our rarest breeds.

Last year, only 147 Cardigan Welsh corgi puppies were registered with the Kennel Club. That this represents a marked improvement on figures a decade ago, when fewer than 50 puppies were registered in one year, doesn't diminish the challenge facing the breed in safeguarding its numbers and its homegrown breeding stock.

However, chairman of the Cardigan Welsh Corgi Association Karen Hewitt discerns grounds for quiet optimism. Mrs Hewitt, who this year judged the breed at Crufts, is cheered by the interest Cardigans invariably attract at Crufts' breed showcase Discover Dogs and the extent to which this interest currently translates into puppy sales and new owners.

'My last litter sold in no time,' she reveals. For Mrs Hewitt, this is confirmation of the high regard in which she's held Cardigans for more than 30 years. 'They're brilliant—a big dog on short legs, great with children, one-family rather than one-person dogs, clever and often quite laid back.'

Why, then, is their popularity ranking in the doldrums? The Cardigan Welsh corgi has never enjoyed the iconic status of the Pembroke Welsh corgi, to which it's closely related. This is partly attributable to the Pembroke's championing by the world's best-known dog owner, Queen Elizabeth II.

Until 2018, when the last of her Pembroke corgis died, she had owned 14

*Alamy; Joe Bailey; Sarah Fanrsworth/Country Life Picture Library; Alamy; Shutterstock*

generations of the red-and-white-coated Welsh herding dogs. For many people, 'corgi' means a Pembroke corgi, meaning that the Cardigan has, correspondingly, been somewhat overlooked.

However, the breed deserves our attention. Longer-backed and longer-tailed than Pembrokes—their alternative Welsh name, *Ci Llatharid* or 'yard dog', came about because a typical Cardigan measures a Welsh yard from nose to tail tip—they share their sister breed's best qualities: loyalty, alertness, intelligence and an instinct to protect their owners.

'They're a guarding breed,' points out Mrs Hewitt. 'They do like to protect and they have an unusually big bark, deeper than that of Pembrokes.'

> 'A big dog on short legs, Cardigans are great with children, one-family rather than one-person dogs'

They also enjoy robust health, are unfussy eaters and, with their double coats that keep off the rain, are able to accompany their owners outdoors in the worst British weather. That the Cardigan is seasonally a heavy moulter and requires regular grooming is, owners agree, a small price to pay for the joy they bring.

Mrs Hewitt remembers the first champion Cardigan she bred with particular fondness: 'Ted was a dream dog and came as close to having a sense of humour as any dog can. When my husband took him to work, he quickly learned that the pub was part of Jonathan's lunchtime. One day, Ted disappeared and was discovered waiting outside the pub.'

She also commends the breed as a practical choice for many families. 'For me, they fit in with everything I want to do. They will walk for miles, but don't tear the house apart if they're not exercised excessively.' Mrs Hewitt's current dog, 2½-year-old Carrie, is happy to curl up under the seat in her husband's narrow boat.

Her newest dog is Carrie's brindle-point tricolour daughter, Sally, still a puppy. Mrs Hewitt favours red and brindle Cardigans, partly on account of their eye colour: 'I like the warm, dark expression.'

For Mrs Piears, the decision to buy her first Cardigan Welsh corgi in 1995 was a sort of homecoming. 'I was born and bred in Cardiganshire,' she explains. 'These dogs originated in the same part of the world as me.'

Today, Mrs Piears has three dogs: 13-year-old blue-merle Moli, six-year-old blue-merle Lili and Lili's son, Daio, four, a red-point tricolour. They are, she admits, 'a little tribe' and she considers Moli and Lili's standoffishness with other dogs to be less characteristic of the breed than Daio's happy gregariousness.

Although both Mrs Hewitt and Mrs Piears came to Cardigans after showing other breeds—German shepherds and rough collies, respectively—neither has ever regretted the switch. What's more, they've passed on their enthusiasm.

'I'm sure my daughter will have a Cardigan when she can,' enthuses Mrs Hewitt, 'and my very young grandson was really keen to see more Cardigans at Crufts this year.'

In these families, at least, the Cardigans' future is assured. After three decades, Mrs Hewitt describes them affectionately as 'smashing little dogs'. 🐾

## Corking corgis

**• The Kennel Club officially recognised Cardigan and Pembroke Welsh corgis (above) as separate breeds as recently as 1934, although both claim ancient origins. The Cardigan is usually considered the older breed, believed to have been brought to Wales over 3,000 years ago by Celtic tribes.**

• The distinctive marking of many Cardigan Welsh corgis' backs is sometimes called a 'fairy saddle', from a legend that, long ago in Wales, fairies rode on Cardigans.

**• So precious were corgis as herding and guard dogs that they were protected in early Welsh law, with harsh penalties for those who menaced, harmed or stole the dogs.**

• In the 1988 film *The Accidental Tourist*, William Hurt's dog, Edward (*left*), is a tricoloured Cardigan Welsh corgi whose real name was Bud.

# Sweet like chocolate

Never judge a book by its cover—or a labrador by its chocolate coat, especially now they are no longer reviled in the shooting field, says **Katy Birchall**

**Photographs by Millie Pilkington**

IT'S been a long time coming, but attitudes towards chocolate labradors are changing,' declares Dorothy Walls-Duffin of Grangemead Labradors. 'You always used to hear that chocolates were no good in the shooting field—now, an awful lot of gamekeepers have them. That speaks for itself.'

As a book shouldn't be judged by its cover, nor should a labrador be judged by its colour, but the general opinion among the country set has long been that blacks rule the roost, yellow and fox reds are modern favourites and chocolates belong in the show ring. Even the name 'chocolate' alludes to a pampered pet—the shade was called 'liver' for the first half of the 20th century, but was changed to sound more appealing.

The earliest record of chocolates is two 'liver' pups born in the Buccleuch kennel in 1892, but the black coat was the colour of choice at the time and remained so when the labrador was officially recognised in 1903. Although there were notable attempts to popularise chocolates, it wasn't until after the Second World War that they began to gain attention. With their rich brown coats, gentle eyes and devoted nature, the dogs were embraced by show enthusiasts and became a big hit as family pets, but continued to be largely ignored by the shooting world. Consequently, their trainability and working instinct was bred out of them—this is the challenge for today's chocolate devotees.

> 'Everyone told me they were useless. That made me determined to prove they weren't'

'When I got my first, everyone told me it was a bad idea because they were useless. That made me determined to prove that chocolates could be just as good as blacks or yellows,' reveals Mrs Walls-Duffin, a renowned breeder of 25 years and an instrumental player in the growing success of chocolates in the field. 'It's been a long and careful process of putting working lines in. At one time, you were laughed at for taking chocolates out, but gamekeepers would see my dogs working nicely and mention they wouldn't mind having one.'

Polly Gibb of Killyrudden Gundogs recalls the resistance she encountered when she first started working her chocolates several years ago: 'I was trying to get some picking up from a gentleman, but he said no on the grounds that he wouldn't have a chocolate labrador on his shoot. ➤

'I'd won a novice working test, an open working test and was competing in field trials, but that was the attitude then. Things have changed and the shape of working chocolates has gotten much better.'

Coat-colour genetics in labradors is complex and thorough research is absolutely essential before any attempts are made at breeding for a certain colour. The Kennel Club recognises black, yellow and liver/chocolate labradors, the coat of a puppy being determined by the genes it inherits from both parents. The black gene is dominant, but there are nine different labrador genotypes and it all depends on which genes the parents carry, meaning a few possible outcomes.

For example, two black dogs could produce a litter of all three colours, two chocolates can have chocolate and yellow, but a yellow and a chocolate could make for a solely black litter.

'I breed my chocolate bitches to black or yellow field-trial champions—sometimes, you end up with a litter of black puppies, but the important thing is that those pups carry

## Major moments in the history of labrador breeding

- **1880s** The first entries in the Stud Book of the Duke of Buccleuch's Labrador Retrievers are Ned in 1882 and Avon in 1885—these dogs are considered to be the foundation of the modern labrador.
- **1892** Two 'liver' labradors are born at the Buccleuch kennel.
- **1899** The first registered yellow labrador, Ben of Hyde, is born at the kennel of Maj Radclyffe.
- **1903** The labrador retriever is recognised by The Kennel Club.
- **1916** The Labrador Retriever Club is founded under club chairman the Hon Arthur Holland-Hibbert, later Lord Knutsford, of the Munden kennel, and secretary Mrs Quintin Dick, later Lorna, Countess Howe, of the Banchory kennel.
- **1924** Yellows dogs are given a boost by the foundation of The Yellow Labrador Club.
- **1930s** Lady Ward of Chiltonfoliat Labradors attempts to popularise 'liver' labradors, but they remain a minority.
- **1964** Cookridge Tango becomes the first chocolate labrador show champion—it was in the 1960s that the chocolate finally enjoyed a rise in popularity.

*Facing page:* **Bedlam by name, but (almost certainly) not nature.** *Above:* **The Duke of Rutland with his beloved Nelson, his second chocolate, who could find stray birds younger dogs had missed.** *Below:* **Liver labrador Chaos will work as well as any other colour**

chocolate,' Mrs Gibb explains, having bred them for more than 20 years. 'I'm passionate about showing people what they can do. My aim is to have a chocolate stud dog chosen by others because of his ability, not his colour.'

Belvoir Castle has been home to labradors for generations and that tradition was, until recently, upheld by Nelson, the second choco-late to be owned by the Duke of Rutland, whose 'beloved and trusted friend' died in August. 'The reason I have had chocolates is because of my father-in-law,' the Duke explains. 'He was a farmer in Wales and introduced me to them. Up until that point, as a family, we always had yellow labradors.' The Duke is convinced there was no difference in his dog's capability.

'Nelson was a very good gundog, but, latterly, was too old to come out on shoot days. Someone else worked him for me as I shot and he did very well. He used to enjoy those days immensely.

On occasion, when he went out with me for a walk, he still somehow managed to rummage under a bush and find a stray bird that the younger dogs had totally missed.'

Since owning chocolates, the Duke admits his eye is naturally drawn to them, but adds: 'They can all be equally greedy, stubborn and amusing no matter what colour they are. Any

> 'The ultimate goal is to see a chocolate as a field-trial champion. That would be something else'

labrador I have does, however, have to have a wide head. I like the old-fashioned look, rather than the newer style of dog with the slimmer heads. I also like a nice bushy tail.'

Athletic and strong, working chocolate labradors today quickly extinguish any lurking associations of their colour with laziness. 'Last season, I had two chocolates out with me. The keeper nodded at the bigger of the two and said: "There's your idiot." But then, he watched him work,' laughs Diana Stevens of Wylanbriar Labradors. 'They're powerful dogs and just as fast as blacks and yellows.'

One drawback to the show background can be a lack of self-control, she admits, finding some chocolates have a tendency to make noise as a response to the adrenaline.

'If you have a dog with a habit of whining and you wanted to breed it to produce more working dogs, you'd find the best, quietest field-trial champion to try to genetically bring it away from that show line—chocolates haven't had all those years of being bred selectively for positive working traits, unlike the other colours.'

When trainer and breeder Stewart North was given Maggie, a chocolate bitch that could no longer be cared for by its owner, he had no idea that she would become a member of his Northglen Gundog team. 'I thought I'd train her up and find her a new home, but I realised she had a lot of excellent qualities,' he admits.

'After doing the research, I covered Maggie with a black labrador dog and we had a litter of six. ➤

**Miss Stewart with Panic, 10, Bedlam (Killyrudden Mizzle; the new litter was named after Farrow & Ball paints) and Chaos, four**

'I kept one of the chocolates, Sam, and the rest is history. He's one of only three chocolates to win an open field trial. He's a wonderful, consistent dog.'

Mr North insists that encountering any prejudice against chocolates only motivates him further. 'There are always going to be people who make judgements before they've seen the dog work. If I had a pound for each time I'd heard a comment about my dogs being chocolate, I'd be a rich man—it was probably the same for yellow labradors once upon a time and it still exists for other minority breeds. As a handler and a competitor, all I want is to compete against the best. The ultimate goal is to see a chocolate as a field-trial champion. That would be something else, wouldn't it?'

> 'If one of my chocolates does something naughty, there's no hiding'

For Susie Stewart, nothing quite compared to taking her three chocolates—Havoc, Panic and Chaos—picking up last season. 'I like to think mine hold their own on a shooting day and they absolutely adore it. It's what they were born to do,' she enthuses. 'Panic is always eager to please and loves working. Chaos is very sweet and trainable; Havoc [who sadly died of old age after Miss Stewart was interviewed for this article] was an outstanding scenting dog. You are starting to see more chocolates out there and they're getting better and better.'

Praising those dedicated to breeding working lines back into the dogs, Miss Stewart is pleased to be welcoming a new pup to her pack, a chocolate bitch named Bedlam, bred by Mrs Gibb and already showing signs of mischievous character. 'You don't want a wallflower when choosing a dog for picking up,' Miss Stewart insists fondly. 'You want them to have a bit of extra something to have the determination to find birds. She has big boots to fill following on from Havoc, that's for sure.'

A chocolate fan for life, Miss Stewart does point out, however, the one disadvantage to the colour: 'If a black labrador misbehaves on a shoot, then it could be anyone's, but if one of my chocolates does something naughty, there's no hiding. They all know it's mine.' 🐾

## A whiter shade of pale

Although such fads are not so prevalent here in the UK as in the US, there is some controversy surrounding unusual labrador coats such as 'silver', 'Champagne', 'charcoal' and 'blue', with puppies sold for substantial amounts of money. Reports of 'silver' labradors first cropped up in America during the 1950s and there are kennels that claim to specialise in these rare colours.

These dogs carry what's known as the 'dilute' (dd) gene—in a black dog, the result is a softer, 'charcoal' coat; for a yellow, it's a pale 'Champagne'; and, for a chocolate, the result is 'silver'. Quite how these colours came about in the first place has sparked fierce debate: some put it down to a result of hidden genes or natural mutations, others believe it to be an outcome of mixed breeding.

Whatever the origins may be, when a rare coat colour becomes sought after, the risk of irresponsible inbreeding from a small gene pool increases and health problems swiftly arise. 'We would urge anyone seeking to buy a puppy to do their homework and not to be dictated to by fashions for specific or "unusual" colours, or other aspects that may detract from a dog's health or welfare, which must always remain a major priority,' cautions Bill Lambert of the Kennel Club.

*Sarah Farnsworth/Country Life Picture Library*

# EXPLORE BRITAIN'S MOST BEAUTIFUL GEORGIAN BUILDINGS

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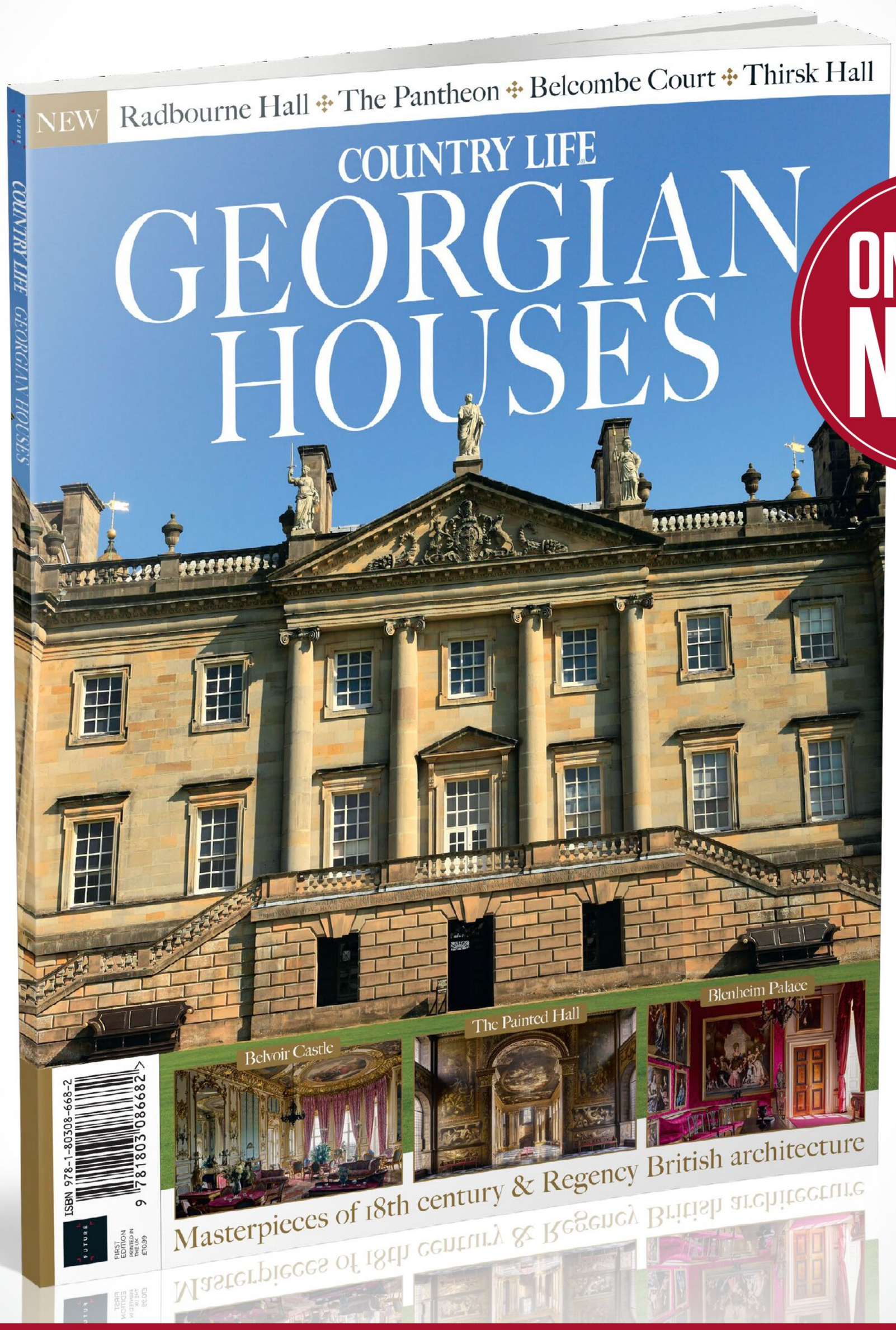


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# Hopelessly devoted to you

Capable of feeling jealousy and grief, as well as the love and adoration we've basked in for centuries, the dog is a creature like no other for **John Lewis-Stempel**

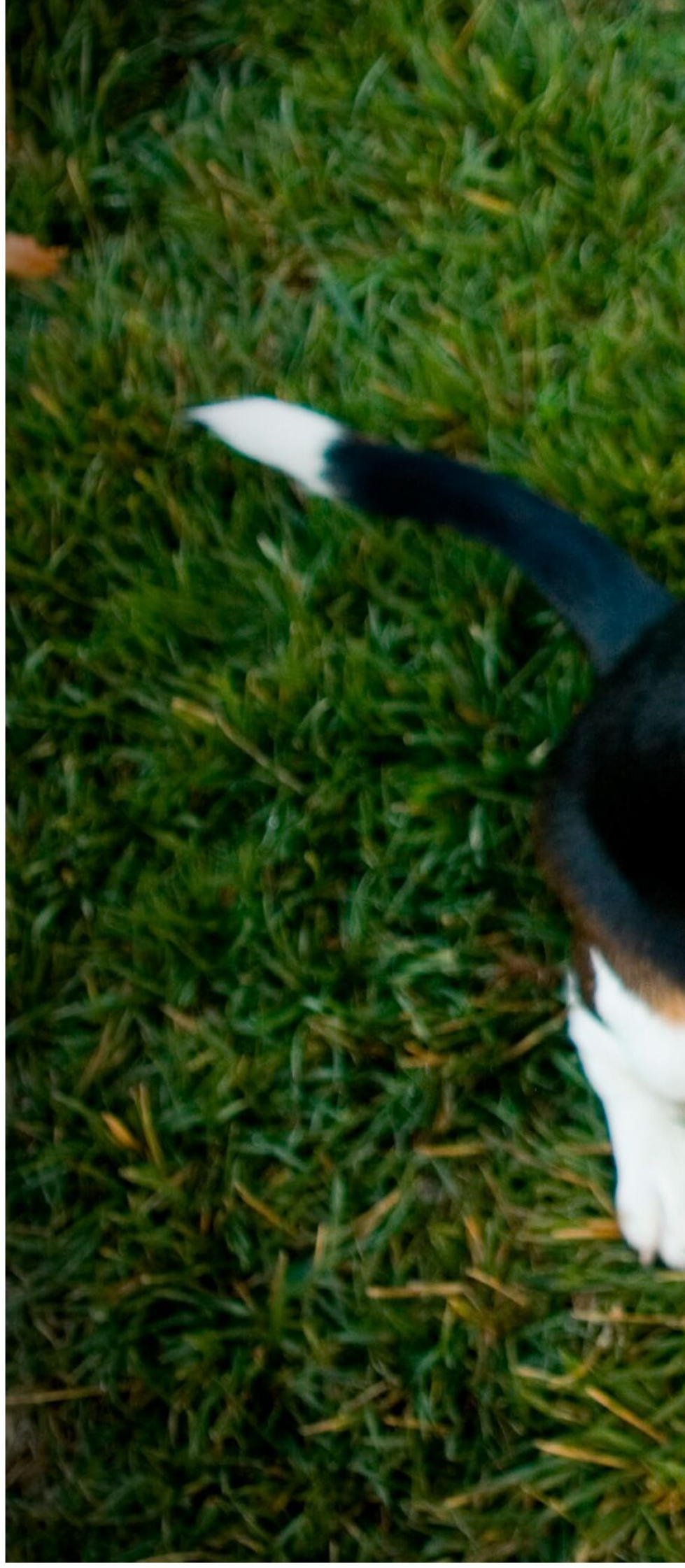
MAN'S best friend is also Man's oldest friend. According to some archaeologists, the grey wolf—Fido and Fluffy's ancestor—was tamed as long ago as 30,000BC. Other experts maintain this timescale is barking up the wrong tree and the wolf was brought in from the wilderness cold about 12,000 years ago. Either way, the dog was the first domesticated creature and its woof announced the Anthropocene, the era when humans learned how to manipulate Nature. When we, and indeed Rover, departed noble savagery.

The contretemps over the date of doggie domestication is an indictment of how little we truly understand our canine companions, of which there are a billion or so worldwide and 10 million in the UK. It is only in the past decade that the innermost workings of the canine brain have been truly revealed and, even then, in mere bite-sized pieces.

*Canis lupus familiaris* and the wolf share 99.9% of their mitochondrial DNA—which is why the family pet retains the wolverine capacity to sniff out substances at one part per trillion and will wolf down anything. However, this small scrap of genetic difference makes Lassie a creature you want sitting in front of the fire and the terrible-toothed tormentor in *Little Red Riding Hood* the creature you hide from behind a tree. Dogs, on chromosome six, have three genes that code for hyper-sociability—humans have something similar. Wolves lack this genetic quirk.

> 'When you gaze into your dog's eyes and Rex gazes back, both brains flood with oxytocin. Love, actually'

Dogs' affinity for human interaction is thus coded in their DNA and chemicals in the brain help to reinforce the human-canine bond. When you gaze into your dog's eyes and Rex gazes back, both brains—the dog's and the owner's— flood with the hormone oxytocin, which produces a positive emotion. Love, actually. This love, as well as being categorical, is directed.



*Top left:* **Laugh and your dog laughs with you: canine emotions run the full gamut.** *Left:* **Any dog will be delighted to see its owner, whether they've been away for 20 minutes or 20 years.** *Above:* **On the alert: a pat or a treat will be equally welcome**

When dogs, in an MRI experiment run at Emory University in the USA, sniffed a rag soaked in their owner's scent, activity spiked in their caudate nucleus—a reward centre in the brain involved in emotional attachment—yet it didn't spike when a stranger's scent was used instead. Small wonder, then, that Argus, Odysseus's loyal hound, 'wagged his tail' when his master returned

after a 20-year absence. Or that Prince, during the First World War, tracked his way independently from London to join his master in the trenches of the Western Front. (This extraordinary episode was later verified by the RSPCA.) A dog's devotion is… dogged. Oh, and do not heed the catty types who aver that labradors are only in it for the tasty treats. In laboratory testing, dogs were discovered to derive as much pleasure from social rewards, such as praise, as from snacks. Good dogs!

Canine emotions go beyond love. Traditionally, the emotion of jealousy was thought to occur only in primates. Recent scientific studies have provided evidence that dogs feel it too. Ditto grief—although this is surely no surprise to anyone who has visited the memorial in Edinburgh to Greyfriars Bobby, the Skye terrier that, the story goes, spent 14 years watching over the grave of its former master.

> ‘Dogs derive as much pleasure from praise as from snacks’

Empathy is another complex emotion that dogs are capable of experiencing. Psychologists have claimed that contagious yawning is linked to empathy in humans—those who yawn back are thought to be empathising with the initial yawner's feelings of boredom, fatigue or stress. Tested dogs yawned after their owners did but were immune to the yawns of strangers.

The key to comprehending canines is co-evolution. As humans and wolves began to work and live together, wolves that socialised well with humans passed on their desirable and desired genes. However, the two species also ‘rewired’ each other, which goes some way to explaining why neurotic Shadows may be helped by antidepressant drugs. This ‘rewiring’ has particularly affected the pooch IQ.

Pooch is derived from ‘puppy’, itself derived from the French word *poupée*, for doll. Your bow-wow ➤

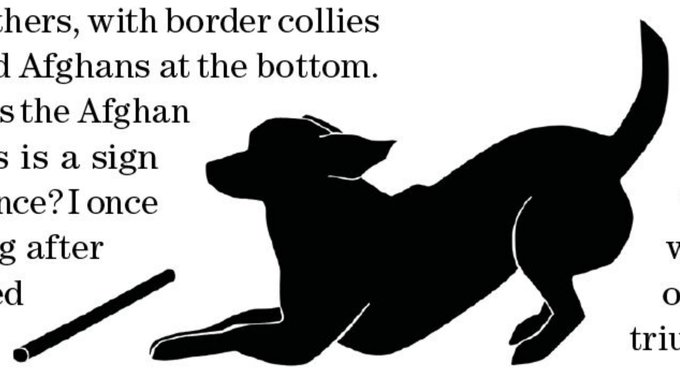
**Sniffing out the truth: dogs can not only understand tone and expression, but also words and even lies, with an IQ far above a cat**

will appreciate this lexicographical snippet, as dogs understand your words and not only, as commonly supposed, the tone of your voice. Indeed, one border collie named Chaser has learned the names of 1,022 different toys and, when commanded to pick up a specific toy, she retrieves the correct one about 95% of the time. More recently, Chaser has been taught to recognise verbs: she knows the difference between picking something up and putting her paw on it. More laboratory scans of the canine brain, this time at Hungary's Loránd University, indicate that when dogs hear human voices—as opposed to other noise—a specific area of the brain lights up, as per humans.

Dogs are equally adept at reading wordless humans, often better than chimps. A hound directed by a pointing hand towards a treat will investigate 85% of the time; Tarzan's sidekick Cheeta might manage it... sometimes. No other species can decipher human gestures as well as dogs. Impressively, dogs can 'read' human emotions as they manifest on the human visage, even in photographs; when dogs regard snaps of human faces, they have aversive responses to the angry-looking mouths and eyes, but not to the happy ones. (It turns out that humans are less adept at interpreting dog expressions: that guilty look the hound assumes after being caught red-pawed raiding the kitchen bin? Sadness at the admonition, not shame for the criminal behaviour.) By the way, do not tell your dog porky pies. According to a team from Kyoto University, Fifi can tell if you are lying to her. Make no bones about it, untrustworthy owners get unruly dogs.

> 'I worked like a dog. I was its dogsbody. Who, then, was the idiot and who the intellect?'

The average dog's IQ, the experts have determined, is roughly as sophisticated as that of a 2½-year-old baby's. Some breeds are smarter than others, with border collies top of the scale and Afghans at the bottom. Then again, perhaps the Afghan hound's dumbness is a sign of superior intelligence? I once spent a day looking after a lordly Afghan. Fed it. Poop-scooped it. Fetched the frisbee for it. Hunted under the sofa for its favourite toy. I worked like a dog. I was its dogsbody. Who, then, was the idiot and who the intellect?



Oh, and forget the eternal adage 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks', because it is deceiving dogma. Canines are 'open-ended learners'. Last year, an abandoned elderly golden labrador tipped up at our house in rural France. Within a week, she had majored in English commands and *toilette* etiquette. (It did not require Inspector Maigret and his pipe to figure she had been kept outside in a yard all her previous life.) She also learned her new name—Honey, because she is so sweet—and those of her new family, whether they walked on two legs or four.

Honey's success as a mature student is one more reproof to that age-old question of which is smarter, the dog or the cat. Don't take my word for it: scientists have now counted the neurons in the cerebral cortex of both species and deduced that canines are more 'cognitively capable'. That weird noise? Dogs and their owners howling with triumphant laughter. 🐾

*Sara Farnsworth/Country Life; Alamy; Getty; Shutterstock*

## The good stuff

**➤ Dog tag,**
Mungo & Maud
(www.mungoandmaud.com)

**▲ Dog coat,** Barbour
(www.barbour.com)

**▼ Paw print bracelet,**
Kiki Mcdonough
(www.kiki.co.uk)

**➤ Bulldog corkscrew,**
Deakin & Francis
(www.deakinandfrancis.com)



**➤ Cufflinks,**
Theo Fennell
(www.theofennell.com)

**Dog carrier,** Suzy's
(www.suzysdog
fashion.co.uk)

# Paws for thought

### Your four-legged friend deserves to step out in style, says **Hetty Lintell**

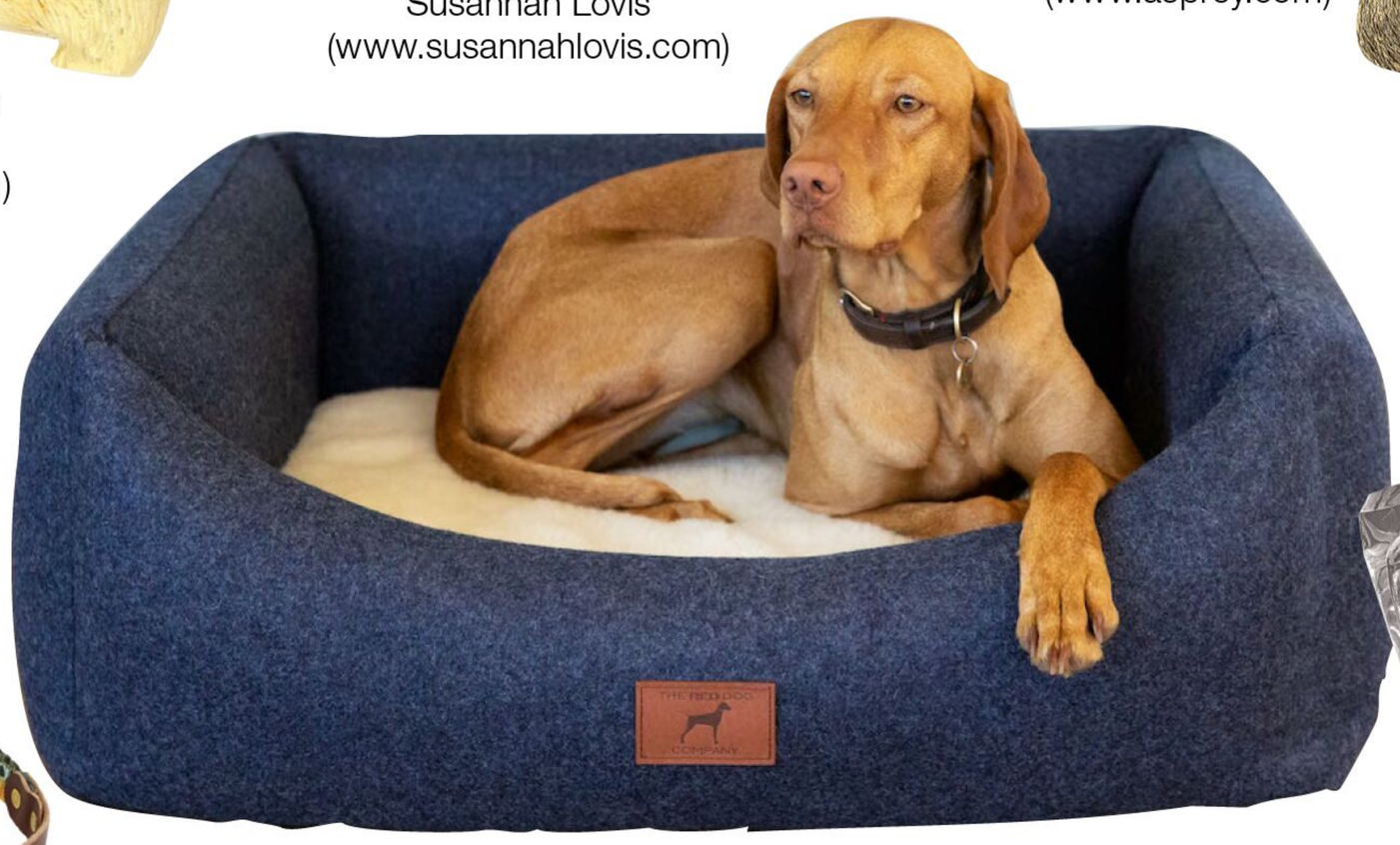
THERE are several hundred different breeds of dog in the world, with each individual hound having a nose print as unique as a human fingerprint (which, apparently, can be used to accurately identify them).

Dogs have inspired design, art and music for centuries—at the end of The Beatles' *A Day in the Life*, a high-pitched dog whistle was recorded by Paul McCartney for his sheepdog. We're definitely not saying that a dog is an accessory, but there have certainly been many accessories designed for them. If it happens that these please an owner's eye, too, then that's just fine.

**▲ Personalised dog bowl,**
The Oak & Rope Company
(www.theoakandropecompany.co.uk)

**➤ Diamond and ruby brooch,**
Susannah Lovis
(www.susannahlovis.com)

**➤ Hound head decanter,** Asprey
(www.asprey.com)



**▲ Dog bed,** Red Dog Company
(www.thereddogcompany.com)

**▼ Collar and lead in brown trout,**
Orvis (www.orvis.com)

# Take me to Neverland

## Intelligent, devoted and adept at working all country, the flatcoated retriever is the Peter Pan of the dog world with a tail that never stops wagging, discovers **Matthew Dennison**

**Photographs by Sarah Farnsworth**

IN the paintings—six, in total—that H. Reginald Cooke, doyen of Edwardian flatcoated retriever breeders, commissioned from artist Maud Earl, his raven-black dogs each extend to an unglimpsed handler a single, limp-bodied grouse. The dogs' tails and legs are well feathered, autumn sunlight glancing off glossy coats. Their mouths are gentle, their heads erect, eyes alert, tails momentarily still. In the manner of Earl's paintings, her subjects have a heroic elegance. Supremely handsome and wonderfully reliable workers, they are a sportsman's best companion.

This was how lifelong flatcoat aficionado Charles Eley eulogised the breed in his *History of Retrievers*, a book commissioned at the outbreak of the First World War, although publication was delayed until 1921. Eley celebrated flatcoats' 'beauty and charm… coupled with a natural docility and reciprocal love for man'. Today's owners agree. 'They're so charming, they absolutely capture your heart,' Christiane Bunce, a flatcoat owner for 40 years, tells me. 'They want to please, they'll do anything to please, they're wonderfully affectionate.'

With greater loyalty than accuracy, Eley claimed 'the present moment… finds the flat-coated retriever as firmly entrenched as ever in the minds as well as in the hearts of sportsmen'. What had been true when Eley embarked on his book was no longer the case by 1921. In the final quarter of the 19th century, Kennel Club (KC) founder-chairman Sewallis Shirley MP had championed flatcoats vigorously, but Shirley had been retired for four years when, in 1903, the KC recognised the labrador as a breed in its own right.

> 'These are supremely handsome gundogs and wonderfully reliable workers'

Within less than a decade, a labrador belonging to the Duchess of Hamilton won Britain's inaugural retriever championship. The breed's rise to widespread popularity was swift—and, for the fortunes of flatcoats, devastating—and has continued. In 2018, the Kennel Club registered 36,526 labrador puppies. Flatcoat registrations for the same period totalled 1,146, a figure consistent over the past decade. The sporting dog *sans pareil* of Edwardian England has never regained its erstwhile pre-eminence. 'Very often, people have no idea what these dogs are,' says Tiddy Redpath, the owner of a 10-year-old black flatcoat, Alfie, and eight-year-old liver-coloured Jambo, 'especi-ally the liver-coloured dog.'

It was when looking at Edwardian photographs—shooting-party line-ups and family groups—found in her family home in North Wales, that Tanda Wilson-Clarke discovered her decision to acquire her first flatcoated retriever, in 1976, brought her great-grandparents' favourite breed back into the family after half a century. 'A new keeper came to Vivod in the 1970s,' Mrs Wilson-Clarke remembers. 'He was flatcoat mad. This was what put flatcoats in my mind. Then, there was this wonderful coincidence—my first flatcoat, 43 years ago, was one the keeper bred. Since ➤

*Above:* **Ready to please in work or play: Lily, Oscar, Freddie, Moss and Jake, five of Simon Fitzherbert-Brockholes's six black flatcoated retrievers from the same successful working bloodline.** *Right:* **Luna, the sixth member of the family and the baby at 18 months old**

*Above:* **Mr Fitzherbert-Brockholes with his six black flatcoats and Finn, his sole liver-coloured dog. For him, watching the breed at work sparked a love that has endured 25 years.** *Below:* **Finn's distinctive colour is a relatively recent result of selective breeding**

then, every time we think of getting a new dog, we get out *Book of Dogs* and we always come back to the flatcoat. I've had six so far and they've given me so much pleasure.'

As did a number of British gundogs, the flatcoated retriever emerged as a distinct breed in the second half of the 19th century, as a result of efforts by gamekeepers and sportsmen to develop the best possible dog for picking up a range of quarry over varied country. Its genetic mix almost certainly includes pointers, setters and Canadian water dogs, such as the Newfoundland, alongside more local gundog types.

> 'Appropriately, the adjective most often applied to working flatcoats is "dogged",

It's this mix that accounts for the dog's sleekness and speed, as well as its dense but finely textured coat that appears to ripple as it runs. Early flatcoats were widely known as wavy-coated retrievers and were always black.

Today, a liver colour is also possible—a result of selective breeding. In both colours, the coat ought to lie as flat as possible to the body.

In Mrs Bunce's long experience, the efforts of those early breeders were entirely successful. She has owned a dozen flatcoats and all have proved themselves adept at picking up pheasant, duck and partridge, with some better than others at retrieving smaller birds, such as woodcock, and all equally happy picking up rabbits and hares. 'All of mine have been working dogs, but I prefer to work my dogs rather than my bitches simply on account of stamina. I prefer stockier, old-fashioned flatcoats to show-ring dogs, which can err towards gangliness.'

She cherishes memories of really impressive feats of retrieval: a dog called Gunner that, on a shoot on the Hardwick estate in Shropshire, in an overgrown area on the edge of a thicket, retrieved a woodcock overlooked by other dogs, despite its small size and the effectiveness of its camouflage; one of her three current dogs, eight-year-old Pepper, intently focused on an 80-yard retrieve across water; and the dog who did his best to return to her a Canada goose.

'Flatcoats are absolutely in their element in water,' says Mrs Wilson-Clarke. Yet both owners agree that one of the breed's commendations is the dogs' willingness to work all country. Spaniel-like, a well-trained flatcoat will brave dense cover.

They are also air-scenters, working not only on but above the ground, capable of spotting birds that are lodged in branches, hedges or tight among reeds. Such is their range of talents,

Heroic elegance: High Legh Blarney, one of breed doyen H. Reginald Cooke's flatcoats

among Mrs Wilson-Clarke's previous dogs, several have pointed, too.

For Simon Fitzherbert-Brockholes, who owns seven flatcoats—six black dogs of the same bloodline and a liver-coloured dog called Finn—it was watching them at work that attracted him to the breed 25 years ago. 'I loved watching the flatcoats bred by Joan Marsden [an eminent flatcoat breeder of the 1970s and 1980s and from whose line his black dogs originate]. I loved the way they looked in the field. Since then, I've always had a soft spot for the breed.'

Mr Fitzherbert-Brockholes points to a difference, on which many owners agree, between flatcoats and the more popular labrador. 'A flatcoat doesn't work like a labrador. They have a tendency to do their own thing, but with sound instincts. They will find birds on their own.' Appropriately the adjective most often applied to working flatcoats is 'dogged'. 'They don't give up,' reveals Mrs Bunce. 'They don't consider their job done until every bird is picked up.' Yet

> 'Enthusiasts love their ability to mature as gundogs without losing their puppyishness'

owners insist that their working methods have a lightness and elegance.

All of which isn't to say that a flatcoat is born ready for work. Typically, training takes longer than that of a labrador or some spaniels. As a breed, flatcoats require time and patience, although a nature that is both intelligent and biddable means they aren't resistant if properly handled. Enthusiasts love the breed's ability to mature as trained gundogs without losing their puppyishness in other ways. They are lively, sociable, affectionate dogs, characterised by the KC as optimistic and friendly, 'demonstrated by enthusiastic tail action'.

After four decades, Mrs Bunce describes flatcoated retrievers as 'eternal Peter Pans: they bounce up and down until the day they die'. With this ebullience comes demonstrativeness. All owners agree that flatcoats are zealous lickers and great leaners. 'They would prefer to be sellotaped to your face or hermetically attached to your inner thigh at all times,' says Mrs Redpath. 'They're playful and puppy-like, springing into the air on all fours in delirious anticipation of food and fun.' Even at work, awaiting instruction, Mrs Bunce has found that they eagerly press themselves up against their handler's legs.

A KC spokesman describes flatcoated retrievers to Country Life as 'intelligent, friendly and affectionate, making them an ideal family companion. They have a playful temperament and are active dogs, well suited to country life with plenty of exercise and mental stimulation'.

Their record with children is a good one, too. Mrs Wilson-Clarke remembers a protective two-year-old bitch responding to one of her own newborn children in a manner 'just like Nana in Peter Pan: she really looked after her'.

## Going flat out

**• Gundog authority Col David Hancock identified the flatcoat's distinguishing characteristics as 'glamour and charm'.**

• So highly valued were flatcoats by Edwardian shots that, in 1908, H. Reginald Cooke turned down an offer of 260gns for a champion dog. This is equivalent to £30,000 today.

**• Named as 'Dog of the Century' by the National Canine Defence League, Swansea Jack was almost certainly a flatcoat retriever that, in the 1930s, in a number of different incidents, rescued as many as 27 people from Swansea Docks.**

• Two key dogs in the establishment of today's flatcoated retriever belonged to a gamekeeper, Mr J. Hull, in the 1860s. Appropriately, given the breed's exuberance, they were called Old Bounce and Young Bounce.

Mrs Bunce's daughter's first word wasn't mummy or daddy, but the name of the flatcoat bitch that kept assiduous watch over her cot and high chair.

That such sweet-tempered dogs continue to attract a relatively small number of owners seems surprising, but flatcoats aren't a breed for the sedentary, nor are they suited to confined living quarters. These are dogs that want and require regular exercise. 'They like to get out: they want to be doing,' agrees Mrs Bunce, whose dogs are kennelled outside in summer and spend winter nights in the warmth of the back kitchen. Above all, it's their energetic natures, not their size that has contributed to their decline as a family pet.

Undeniable, however, are flatcoats' health problems, of which all potential owners need to be aware. More than 50% of flatcoats die of cancer, according to a recent study, with a particularly high susceptibility to histiocytic sarcoma, an aggressive form of cancer that is often difficult to diagnose early enough to then successfully treat. Research is ongoing, including by scientists working at the University of Cambridge, but the problem isn't yet resolved. Sadly, very few of those who have owned a number of flatcoats over the years have escaped without losing at least one dog to cancer.

'The joy of flatcoats is that they really lift your spirits because they're always happy,' Mrs Wilson-Clarke summarises. Or, as a Victorian sportsman recorded of a particular flatcoat in 1880: 'His eye was neither more nor less than a human one. I never saw a bad expression in it.' 🐾

*Look and Learn/Bridgeman Images*

# How the terrier took over Britain

Most owners would agree that life with a terrier is a life enriched, thanks to their fierce loyalty, big personalities and reckless dedication to chasing things. **Kate Green** explains how this sporting dog diversified all over Britain

Illustrations by Fiona Osbaldstone

IN 1815, a hunting-mad Oxford undergraduate called John Russell had a Damascene moment that redefined the dog world. Russell was strolling in Magdalen's meadows, 'Horace [poet] in hand, but Beckford [sporting diarist] in his head', when he met a milkman who had, trotting beside him, 'the animal of his dreams'. It was an enchanting little rough-coated, tan-and-white terrier bitch called Trump.

According to the Rev E. W. L. Davies, Russell's curate and biographer, the daydreaming student 'halted as Actaeon might have done when he caught sight of Diana disporting in her bath; but unlike that ill-fated hunter, he never budged from the spot til he had won the prize and secured it for his own'.

Parson Russell devoted the rest of his life to his north Devon parish of Swimbridge, to hunting and to breeding the eponymous dog, using Trump as the foundation. His terriers had to be predominantly white with a few patches of colour, long enough in the leg to keep up with a pack of foxhounds, but sufficiently compact to fit down an earth and bolt the fox.

However, small, hairy hunting dogs existed long before Russell and other field sportsmen began developing the 28 distinctive regional types that comprise the Kennel Club's (KC) Terrier Group. Johannes Caius, a doctor of physics at Cambridge, wrote graphically in *Of English Dogs*, his epic 1576 work, of 'Terrars' and their insane dedication to chasing creatures bigger and stronger than themselves: they 'make afraid, nyppe and bite the Foxe and the Badger in such sorte that eyther they teare him in pieces with theyr teeth, beyng in the bosoms of the earth, or else hayle and pull them perforce out of theyr lurking angles, darke dungeons'.

The terrier's job was to help hounds by wriggling through thick undergrowth and into narrow crevices in fearless pursuit of foxes, rabbits, badgers, otters, polecats, wildcats and weasels, to terrorise rodents out of haystacks or drains and to cleanse slums of rats. In the 19th century, Lord Lonsdale's Fell terrier reputedly followed an otter 23ft through rock—it took three days' blasting to extract it. Terriers were feisty money-earners; the concept of keeping one as a family pet didn't develop until the advent of dog shows in the 1860s.

Although the terrier is still an essential and much-loved adjunct to a sporting man's life, and some forms of terrier work are still legal under the Hunting Act (2004), nowadays, they are as commonly seen trotting, reasonably obediently, around an urban park or snoozing beside their pensioner owner as yapping in the hound van or disappearing, bottom up, down a rabbit hole.

But the chasing instinct will never be bred out entirely: a sleeping terrier can erupt with astonishing speed. He's not a sensible babysitter for a guinea pig and can't be relied upon not to excavate a beloved pet's grave or worry chickens. Be he a pristine white Westie, a piratical Parson Russell or a bustling Norfolk, any squirrel or pigeon idiotic enough to come within range will receive short, noisy and sometimes violent shrift. As C. G. E. Wimhurst wrote in *The Book of Terriers* (1968): 'Do not expect a terrier to have a solemn outlook on life.'

## 1 Airedale

The largest terrier of all hails from Yorkshire, where it was known as the Bingley or Waterside terrier, perhaps later named after the Airedale Show, at which dogs bred to hunt otters in the valleys were shown. It's closely related to the Irish and Welsh terriers, with Manchester and otterhound bloodlines.

The steadfast Airedale was valued as a sentry, police, Red Cross and army messenger dog; it was imported by the Russian Army and popular in the USA—two Airedales perished on *Titanic*. During the First World War, one, Jack, carried a message through half a mile of enemy fire before dropping dead.

**Breed star** President Harding's Laddie Boy had a special chair in which to attend Cabinet meetings at the White House ➢

## ←Lucas

**2** In the 1940s, Sir Jocelyn Lucas, a sporting man and noted breeder of the Ilmer line of Sealyhams, became concerned about the heavier type that was being bred for the show ring, so he crossed one with a Norfolk. The result was endearing: a sweet-faced, mop-haired little dog with more colouring than a Sealyham and a softer coat than a Norfolk. The Lucas is not recognised by the KC, but it has a devoted following in the UK, where there are about 500.

**Breed star** Mtoto, who was flown to the Isle of Wight in racehorse owner Robert Sangster's private plane for a mating

## ↑Dandie Dinmont

**3** The sausage-shaped breed was around centuries before it was named after a character in Walter Scott's 1814 novel *Guy Mannering*. Dandie Dinmont—probably based on Hawick farmer James Davidson, who gained a litter of puppies in a drinking game—was a jolly farmer who kept six dogs and called them all Mustard or Pepper. Despite its aristocratic poodle's topknot and soulful panda eyes, the Dandie Dinmont was a tinker's dog, bred to hunt badgers and otters—today's Dandies are thought to be descended from one found in a trap on the Duke of Buccleuch's estate in 1839. Another story has a gypsy called Piper Allen as the original breeder; the Duke of Northumberland was said to be so enamoured of his dogs that he offered him a farm in return for one.

**Breed stars** Dandie Dinmont's 'Auld', 'Young' or 'Little' Mustards and Peppers

## ↑Bedlington

**6** Despite its curious, lamb-like appearance, the curly-coated Bedlington, which takes its name from a Northumbrian mining village, was bred to catch rabbits for the pot. Known first as the Rothbury terrier, it was a gypsy dog, probably containing Dandie Dinmont and whippet blood.

**Breed star** In the 1820s, Piper, a Bedlington belonging to mason Joseph Ainsley, saved his master's baby from a ferocious sow

## ↑Border

**5** Of all the terrier strains developed by individual hunts, the quizzical-faced border, bred to follow the Border Foxhounds in Northumberland, is arguably the greatest survivor and, according to the KC, 'if nature were left to itself and dogs bred naturally', the end result would closely resemble a Border.

When the breed was first recognised in 1920, there was much anxiety that showing would have a deleterious effect on its sporting characteristics, but, in fact, the KC breed standard—'essentially a working terrier'—is admirably pragmatic.

**Breed stars** Tennis player Andy Murray's Maggie May and Rusty, who have their own Twitter accounts

## ←Bull terrier

**4** The comical, egg-headed bull terrier owes its existence to 19th-century Birmingham 'wide boy' James Hinks. His idea was to mix a fighting dog with strains of smooth-haired terrier, dalmatian and greyhound to produce an all-white 'gentleman's dog'. The first, Old Madman, was born in 1855 and his progeny proved successful in the show ring and lucrative. Champions of the breed include the artist Cecil Aldin, who often painted them with piratical patches, and The Princess Royal.

**Breed star** Bodger in *The Incredible Journey*, Bill Sikes's Bullseye in *Oliver!*, Heloise in *I Capture the Castle*

## ↓Scottish terrier

**7** A close relative of the Cairn, the Scottie's dumpy yet dignified silhouette has become one of Scotland's most famous brands as well as a Monopoly board totem. James VI of Scotland bred them and the 4th Earl of Dumbarton had a pack called the Diehards. Also known as the Aberdeen terrier, present-day Scotties are thought to descend from 19th-century bitch Splinter II. The breed was standardised in about 1879 by Capt Gordon Murray and KC founder Sewallis Evelyn Shirley.

**Breed stars** White House residents Fala, owned by President Roosevelt, Meggie (Eleanor Roosevelt) and Barney and Miss Beazley (George W. Bush), plus the 41 parading at the recent Commonwealth Games

## ↓Cairn

**10** Until the 19th century, when selective breeding for type and colour became fashionable, the Scottish terrier, possibly originating from Spanish (an Armada shipwreck), Pictish or Viking bloodlines, was essentially a hairy little dog built to withstand Highland weather and thick heather.

Described in *Our Friend the Cairn* (1932) as 'perhaps the most compact canine parcel of all the doggy virtues ever seen', the jolly Cairn (named for its ability to squeeze into cairns) was one of a generic group of short-haired Skye terriers before being officially classified at the start of the 20th century.

**Breed star** Terry, a film star whose credits include Toto in the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*

## ↑West Highland

**8** A breed beloved of advertising agencies, the smiley-faced Westie also derives from the original Skye terrier. Some foxhunters thought their colour signified cowardice, a theory disproved by the 8th Duke of Argyll—the dog was originally registered as the Roseneath terrier after his estate—and the 16th Laird of Poltalloch, who developed a white terrier that couldn't be mistaken for a fox and shot.

**Breed star** The one in the 2006 film *The Adventures of Greyfriars Bobby*, much to the annoyance of Skye terrier aficionados, and the impossibly clean Cesar dog-food model

## →Skye terrier

**9** The silky-coated Skye, formerly the terrier of the Western Isles, may be the oldest Scottish breed—one crept miserably out from under the bloodstained skirts of the executed Mary, Queen of Scots in 1587 and Caius described long-haired 'lap dogs brought out of the barbarous borders'. Once the companion of aristocrats, including Queen Victoria, it's now the rarest of all terriers.

The aloof, floppy-haired look belies a tough streak—Robert Louis Stevenson was heartbroken when his Wattie died after one dogfight too many and, during a walk in Hyde Park, renowned breeder James Pratt's pack put up a badger, which, unfortunately, was Victorian naturalist Frank Buckland's pet.

**Breed star** Greyfriars Bobby

### KC Terrier Group puppy registrations in 2013

| | |
|---|---|
| **Airedale** | **555** |
| Australian | 33 |
| **Bedlington** | **482** |
| Border | 6,390 |
| **Bull terrier** | **1,825** |
| Miniature bull terrier | 161 |
| **Cairn** | **1,085** |
| Cesky (Czech) | 26 |
| **Dandie Dinmont** | **105** |
| Smooth fox terrier | 122 |
| **Wire-haired fox terrier** | **604** |
| Glen of Imaal | 55 |
| **Irish** | **362** |
| Kerry Blue | 169 |
| **Lakeland** | **221** |
| Manchester | 198 |
| **Norfolk** | **568** |
| Norwich | 194 |
| **Parson Russell** | **499** |
| Scottish | 712 |
| **Sealyham** | **68** |
| Skye | 17 |
| **Soft-coated Wheaten** | **372** |
| Staffordshire bull terrier | 5,767 |
| **Welsh** | **447** |
| West Highland white | 3,174 |
| TOTAL | 24,211 |

## ↑Staffordshire bull terrier

**11** The stocky, brindle Staffie is rarely considered in the same breath as most other terriers, but it's a prolific breed. It was developed for fighting, about 200 years ago, as a bulldog-terrier cross, and has arguably suffered from over-breeding—most rescue cases have Staffordshire blood—as well as an unfair association with pitbull terriers; devotees say it's the soppiest of dogs.

**Breed star** Sallie, mascot for the 11th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, who guarded injured soldiers in the Battle of Gettysburg. She was killed in battle two years later and is commemorated with a monument in Gettysburg, USA

## ↑Irish

**12** Whether Noah had an Irish terrier on the Ark or one welcomed St Patrick into Ireland are moot points, but it's certainly an ancient breed, wonderfully described in an old Irish manuscript as 'the poor man's sentinel, the farmer's friend and the gentleman's favourite'. In the 1880s, the Irish terrier was the fourth most popular dog in Britain; now, sadly, it's an endangered breed.

**Breed star** Prince, who followed his master, Pte James Brown, from England to the trenches in France; an Irish terrier features on the Animals in War Memorial in Park Lane, London

## ←Welsh

**14** A close relation of the equally tough Lakeland, which was bred to hunt badgers, foxes and otters, the cheery Welsh terrier is an ancient breed, which may originate from pre-Roman invasion times when the Celts retreated to Wales and the Lake District. It received a wider audience when 19th-century transport opened up access to the Welsh mountains. The former Prime Minister Clement Attlee had a Welsh terrier woven into his coat of arms.

**Breed stars** Charlie, John F. Kennedy's White House dog

## →Kerry Blue

**13** One romantic theory in the breed's evolution into a versatile Irish herding and sporting dog is that it's the result of a mating between a blue-black Co Kerry dog and one that swam ashore from a wrecked ship off Tralee in the 1700s—certainly, its silky, wavy coat, which needs regular attention, may owe something to the Portuguese water dog as well as the Wheaten.

**Breed star** Convict 224, owned by Irish revolutionary Michael Collins, who tried to get the Kerry Blue adopted as his country's national dog

## ↓ Parson Russell

**15** The eponymous terrier developed by the sporting vicar was eventually registered by the KC—after much controversy among terrier fanciers—in 1990 and is one of very few breed standards to include the clause 'honourable scars permissable'. Russell's foundation bitch, Trump, is described in his memoirs as 'white with a patch of dark tan over each eye and ear while a similar dot, not larger than a penny piece, marks the root of the tail. The coat, which is thick, close and a trifle wiry, is well-calculated to protect the body from wet and cold but has no affinity with the long rough jacket of the Scotch Terrier. The legs are straight as arrows, the feet perfect, the loins and whole frame are indicative of hardiness and endurance, while the size and height of the animal may be compared to that of a full grown vixen fox'. Edward VII commissioned a painting of Trump, which is still at Sandringham.

**Breed star** Sykes, star of *Midsomer Murders*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Young Victoria* and much more, who, although originally a stray, has Parson Russell characteristics

## ↑ Jack Russell

**16** The term Jack Russell covers a multitude of sins. All terrier characteristics are packed into the bustling Jack Russell, the non-KC registered, shorter, bandy-legged version of the Parson Russell, which is arguably the most fun of the lot. Aldin is probably the ultimate Jack Russell painter and The Duchess of Cornwall is a devotee.

**Breed star** Sir Ranulph Fiennes's Bothie, the only dog to have left paw-prints at both the North and South Poles

## ← Lakeland

**19** Resembling a miniature Airedale, the Lakeland was developed with strains of Bedlington, Border, Dandie Dinmont and wire-haired fox terrier to bolt foxes in the fells. Key figures in its history included a group of gunpowder makers at Elterwater in the 1850s and Tommy Dobson, a bobbin-maker and master of the Eskdale Foxhounds. Eventually, the name Lakeland was settled upon in the 1920s, after which the sporting 5th Earl of Lonsdale (the Yellow Earl), who really championed the dog, became first president of the Lakeland Terrier Club.

**Breed star** Stingray of Derrybah, the only dog to have won Best in Show at both Cruft's and the equivalent, Westminster Show, in the USA, in 1967

## ↓ Patterdale

**18** One of many strains of fell terrier, the Patterdale, named after a Cumbrian village, is usually a neat little black, black-and-tan or, occasionally, rust dog, sometimes with smart white markings, and is much sought after in terrier circles, although it's not KC-recognised.

**Breed star** Bingo, the breed originator, bred by Joe Bowman, master of the Ullswater hounds. Sadly, Bingo was killed by a fox

## → Fox terrier (wire- and smooth-haired)

**17** Beagles, pointers, bulldogs and even dalmatians may have had a part to play in the creation of the fox terrier, which now has two separate breed standards. All pedigrees start from 1870, from three dogs: Old Jock from the Grove hunt kennels, Trap, who was related to the Rev John Russell's dogs, and Tartar. The fox terrier was carefully bred in ducal hunt kennels, at the Beaufort, Belvoir and Berkeley, its popularity exploding in Victorian times; in 1890, a pair of bitches made 500 guineas and top dogs commanded a stud fee of £10.

**Breed stars** Nipper (smooth), star of the His Master's Voice (HMV) advertisements, and Edward VII's Caesar (wire), who followed the coffin at his master's funeral

www.countryfile.co.uk

## ↑ Manchester

**24** In the 19th century, Manchester was the centre for the sports of rat-catching—with betting on how long it took the dog to polish off all the rats in a pit—and rabbit chasing. One amateur owner, John Hulme, decided it would be more economical to develop a dual-purpose dog by crossing a black-and-tan terrier with a whippet. The ratting record was set by Billy, a Manchester terrier reputed to have caught 100 rats in 5min 30sec at the Cockpit in Westminster in 1823. Queen Victoria kept Manchester terriers; each year, Rentokil awards a sash modelled on the one worn by her Jack Black to its most efficient pest-controller.

**Breed star** Agatha Christie's Bingo, inspiration for Hannibal in *Postern of Fate*

## → Glen of Imaal

**20** The Glen, a 'big dog on short legs', had a tough upbringing in Co Wicklow, where it was used for the digging out—and baiting in gaming pits—of badgers, its bowed front legs working like a mechanical digger. The dog is said to date from Elizabethan times, when French mercenaries brought their low-slung hounds to Ireland and mated them with local terriers. Another story had the poor little dogs running on treadmills to operate turnspits.

**Breed star** Dan, owned by the Marquess of Conyngham at Slane Castle, the first known Glen to be photographed, in 1910

## → Soft-coated Wheaten

**21** See Kerry Blue—the debate as to which came first varies in historical reports, but the Wheaten is generally regarded as Ireland's oldest breed. It would have died out but for the efforts of Dr Gerard Pierse, who was taken with a Wheaten he spotted at a field outing for terriers and badgered the Irish Kennel Club to recognise the breed.

**Breed star** Glenguard Mourneside Firecrest, Best in Show at Romford, Essex, in 1946 and the foundation sire of most UK Wheatens

## → Norfolk and Norwich

**23** The two, originally bred as farm dogs in Norfolk with Glen of Imaal, Dandie Dinmont and red Cairn bloodlines, were originally shown as one breed, the Norwich, until 1964. The Norwich has sticking-up ears; the Norfolk tends to be stockier and blunter faced and its ears droop forward. Both have incredibly shrill voices. They've been known as the Cantab terrier, for their popularity with Cambridge students, Jones terriers (after a breeder) and Trumpington terriers (after a kennel).

**Breed star** Joe, devoted companion to artist Alfred Munnings when he rented a ghostly farmhouse in East Anglia

## ↑ Sealyham

**22** In the mid 19th century, field sportsman Capt John Edwards, who lived at Sealyham in Pembrokeshire, set about breeding the perfect working terrier and ratter from a mix of Dandie Dinmont, Corgi, Westie, bull terrier and wire-haired fox terrier blood. They were hugely popular—Princess Margaret had one called Pippin—as evinced by the 15 books on the breed to be found in the KC library. Then, heavier, show-ring types took over and the sporting Sealyham became rarer than the giant panda, until Harry Parsons, who owns a pack of ratters in south Devon, began to sing their praises, aided by a COUNTRY LIFE call to arms (*October 26, 2011*). The Sealyham is now recovering slowly.

**Breed stars** Alfred Hitchcock's Geoffrey and Stanley had cameo roles in *The Birds* 🐾

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# Fancy is as fancy does

Originally known as ‘pudels’ or ‘puddles’, curly coated standard poodles were first bred in Germany to retrieve game from water and, as **Matthew Dennison** discovers, some still cut a typically stylish dash in the field

**Photographs by Sarah Farnsworth**

UNMISTAKABLE is the note of polite consternation that colours Aleks Wasowska's response to my question about her dogs' obedience. Those in question—3½-year-old silver bitch L'Eau and 2½-year-old white bitch Breagh—are standard poodles and, increasingly, familiar fixtures on shoots close to their owner's home near Ely in Cambridgeshire. Both dogs happily pick up pheasant, partridge and duck, she tells me, in all weather and covering all terrain. Miss Wasowska describes L'Eau in pursuit of duck as 'an absolute machine in water', whereas Breagh, from an old Scottish working line of standard poodles, resembles 'a bulldozer through covert, although she is less nimble in water'.

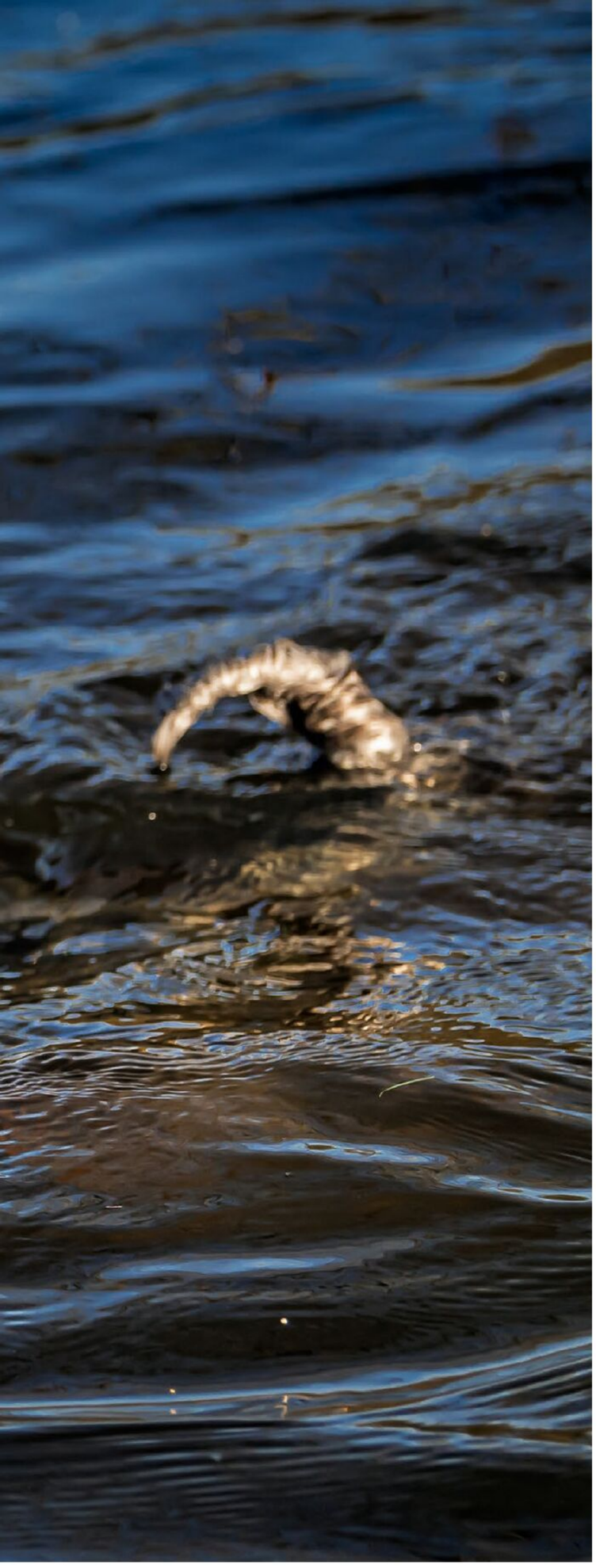
The standard poodle is no longer an everyday sight in the shooting field. Indeed, although the breed remains popular on the Continent and in the US, the standard poodle is no longer widely seen in Britain at all. In the past decade, the Kennel Club registered about 1,000 puppies a year on average—the French bulldog, by contrast, registered nearly 40,000 puppies in 2020.

Thinking aloud, I wonder how the shooting fraternity reacts to Miss Wasowska's appearance in the field with these dogs, which many have forgotten were first bred as curly coated water dogs, especially as Breagh's snow-white coat is clipped into a show cut, the traditional 'topiary' of pom-poms derided by detractors. As working-dog expert Col David Hancock wrote in 2013: 'Stand by for ignorant comments from one-generation sportsmen, unaware of [the standard poodle's] heritage.' 'There are some raised eyebrows,' Miss Wasowska admits with a smile, which give way to 'considerable respect' by the end of the first drive and the dogs' display of prowess.

For their owners, the standard poodle's current demise is incomprehensible. Marie-Francoise Phillips, known as 'MF' and a poodle owner for 25 years, eulogises the breed's 'happy nature'. The standard poodle, she tells me, is 'always playful, they want to live their life to the full'. The Kennel Club agrees, describing them as 'gay-spirited and good-tempered'.

These are sturdy, energetic, intelligent dogs, as owner Sue Bryson describes her standard poodles Sasha, Storm and Finn, all three happiest outdoors regardless of the weather, the density of the undergrowth or the coldness of the water. Yet, exercise over, they're content to settle down beside the fire or in their beds in the kitchen. Mrs Bryson notes that they can be gung-ho on occasion, but with a dignity and presence that every owner regards as special, and 'very versatile: able to flush out pheasants in a field by scent', as well as happy hunting by sight. 'Whatever catches their attention—if a rabbit pops up in front of them, they're off!'

Theirs is an engaging heritage. The best-known standard poodle to make its mark on British history belonged to the Cavalier hero Prince Rupert of the Rhine. 'Boye' or 'Boy'—described in different accounts as



'Pudel' and 'Puddle'—sported a thick, white coat with a lion-like mane and proud, plume-like tail. Rupert's enemies invested the dog with magic, even diabolic powers, alternately claiming he was bulletproof (sadly, mistakenly) or, in an age in which belief in witchcraft was widespread, that he was the Prince's familiar: 'No Dog, but a Witch, a Sorceresse, an Enemy to Parliament… a meer Malignant Cavalier-Dog.'

Early in 1643, Boy became the hero of a Royalist pamphlet, the work of Thames waterman-turned-poet John Taylor. In *A Dialogue, or, Rather a parley between Prince Ruperts dogge whose name is Puddle, and Tobies dog whose name is Pepper, &c*, it is Puddle that the reader admires: so impressive are his magic tricks that Pepper eventually joins him, Puddle helpfully providing him with sheep's wool to wear as the equivalent of a poodle wig.

Boy/Puddle died in the summer of 1644, following Rupert's defeat at York, shot when loyally searching for his master in the aftermath of battle. An anti-Royalist pamphlet marked his death.

*A Dog's Elegy or Rupert's Tears*, published on July 27, depicted Boy as black rather than white, in keeping with his 'evill' nature; it described the dog as 'whelp'd of a Malignant Water-witch'.

At least the association of Rupert's dog with water was accurate. Whatever their origins—and it seems most likely that they first emerged in Germany, hence the name 'poodle' derived from the German *pudel*—poodles were first reared for retrieving game from water. These wildfowlers' dogs had tight curly coats, close and harsh in texture, only partly permeable by water, which protected the animals from the cold. Even now, Miss Wasowska tells me that after retrieving from water, both L'Eau and Breagh look like damp mops—and moisture is trapped in the outermost layer of their coats—yet the dogs remain dry and warm underneath those curls.

Traditionally, the twin requirements of warmth and mobility in the water were offered as grounds for the development of the extravagant style of coat clipping unique to poodles, protecting parts of the dog from the cold and preventing unnecessary dragging, especially round the muscular hindquarters that propel the dogs through the water. The coats of working poodles are invariably cut short—an effect similar to that of the curly-coated retriever—although, as Miss Wasowska's Breagh illustrates, the effectiveness of a well-trained standard has little to do with the cut of the dog's coat.

Owners agree on these dogs' stamina, energy and intelligence. French-born Mrs Phillips, who, with her husband Edward, lives in London with eight-year-old honey-coloured Felix and two-year-old black Flaeda, characterises the standard poodle as 'very companionable and happy, very athletic and, unless you put your foot down, a little disobedient, loyal dogs, friendly and very clever'. She bought her first in response to an advertisement in COUNTRY LIFE, prompted partly by assurances of the hypoallergenic quality of the poodle's coat, which does not provoke typical allergic reactions. Ever since, she has owned two poodles at a time: like other owners, she believes the poodle does not thrive when kept singly. Mrs Phillips feeds her dogs a combination of kibble and food that she cooks herself—a one-pot lunch of chicken cooked in a jus with herbs, carrots, couscous or rice.

Occasionally, owners point to a certain aloofness in standard poodles' demeanour, both towards other dogs and humans. By contrast, Mrs Phillips describes Felix ➤

'The standard poodle is "always playful, they want to live life to the full"'

**Unfairly derided, Breagh's pom-pom cut is designed for warmth and ease of movement.** *Preceding pages:* **The intelligent eyes of Breagh. Top left: L'Eau lives up to her name on a neat retrieve**

and Flaeda as playful with other dogs and social: 'They like meeting people,' she enthuses—as I found for myself.

Why, then, their current eclipse among the dog-owning public? When, in 2020, a black standard poodle won America's prestigious Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, a clamour of negative comment predictably focused on the dog's elaborately clipped coat. The extravagance of the poodle pom-pom cut has seldom been seen outside the show ring, but has played its part in establishing the breed's reputation for preciousness. More prosaically, as all owners testify, the cost of regular grooming, even for dogs kept in a utility or sporting trim, can be considerable.

Poodles have also fallen victim to their own intelligence. Alongside the comical appearance made possible by their coats and sometimes clown-like clothing, their ability to master tricks made poodles popular in Victorian fairs and circuses, undermining their reputation among sportsmen further. This led to the breeding of smaller dogs that were more easily transported.

Even larger dogs are capable of unusual feats. In the 1890s, George V's unmarried sister, Princess Victoria of Wales, owned a standard poodle called Sammy, which she photographed balancing on the top rail of a pair of outdoor chairs, with a cane clamped between his teeth. Such biddability, however, is not to be taken for granted. 'A standard poodle can't be drilled. They question instructions and they don't respond to reprimands,' notes Miss Wasowska. 'A labrador or spaniel works for you; a poodle works with you.'

For aficionados, such independence is not least among the breed's attractions. 'Once you're a standard-poodle owner,' Mrs Phillips comments, 'you don't switch.' 🐾

## All shapes and sizes

The Kennel Club recognises three poodle varieties, based on size: standard, miniature and toy. Churchill (*above*) is among the best-known miniature-poodle owners, having had two chocolate-brown dogs, Rufus and Rufus II (the latter replaced his predecessor, after the first Rufus was run over in October 1947). The statesman was devoted to both. During a screening of David Lean's *Oliver Twist* at Chequers, Churchill put his hand over Rufus II's eyes in the scene where Bill Sikes tries to kill his bull terrier. 'Don't look now, dear,' he said. 'I'll tell you about it afterwards.'

COUNTRY LIFE chief sub-editor Octavia Pollock has also succumbed to the charms of miniature poodles, with apricot dog Tiffin (*below, aged three months*).

*Getty*

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# The love of a tyke for his master

Defining what makes a Lakeland or a fell terrier can be a challenge, but, whichever it is, it'll be a hard-working handful, advises **Adrian Dangar**

**Photographs by Sarah Farnsworth**

TERRIERS eager for the fray are a familiar sight to anyone who's hunted with the fell foot packs in the steep and spectacularly beautiful Lake District, where foxes are the age-old enemy of Lakeland sheep farmers. Often broken-coated and always long in the leg, these tough little workers were bred for the stamina to run all day with hounds in all weathers and the courage to destroy foxes in rocky fortresses deep underground.

Their work and unconditional loyalty are celebrated in hunting verses still sung today: 'Always remember your terriers/protect them from wet and from cold/for the love of a tyke for his master/can never be measured in gold.'

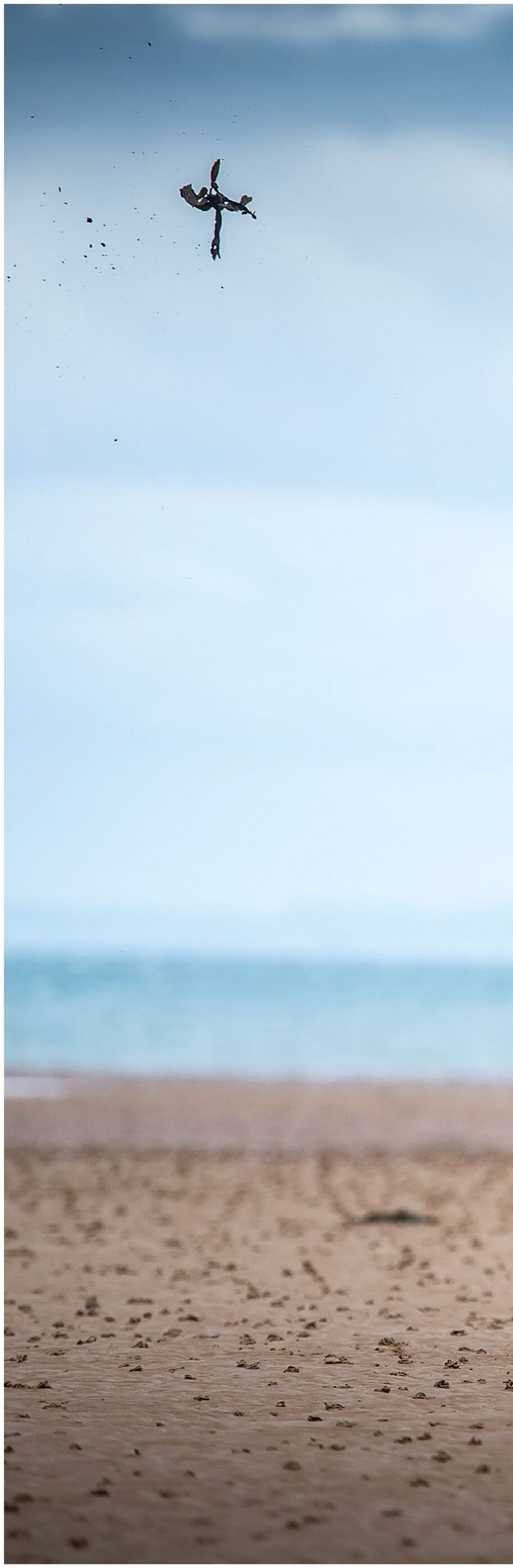
Tommy Dobson founded the Eskdale and Ennerdale hunt in the mid 18th century with light-framed fell hounds famed for their independence and ability to traverse slopes that would spell certain death to their lowland cousins. At the same time, he began developing a suitable stamp of terrier to work alongside his pack by deploying a potent mix of racy Bedlington blood, lines from across the Irish Sea and other game strains of terrier.

The result was a leggy, narrow-chested black-and-tan dog that was able to withstand the harsh Lake District weather thanks to a thick weatherproof coat. The description was agreed at a meeting in Whitehaven in 1921, after which the celebrated Yellow Earl (5th Earl of Lonsdale) became the first president of the now defunct Lakeland Terrier Club.

In 1928, the breed was officially recognised by the Kennel Club (KC); working and show strands of the Lakeland terrier have taken divergent courses ever since, with a representative of the showing side, Stingray of Derrybah, triumphing in 1967 as champion at both Cruft's and the American equivalent.

Although the breeding of KC-registered Lakelands is subject to official scrutiny, other working strains have been judiciously refined over the past century. With little public transport and a slow rural pace of life, many areas of the Lakes boasted their own stamp of terrier, based on the sound principle that every outstanding worker was bred from. ➢

*Above:* **Bottoms up: Pete Smith's Lakeland, Bertie, investigates.** *Right:* **Ted, Charlotte Campbell's Lakeland-Border cross, on home territory**



*Above:* **Mrs Campbell with Ted on the steps of her treehouse office.** *Right:* **Treble trouble: George Norman with his trio of working terriers on the Cumbrian shores**

'Fell breeds are still evolving,' claims Barry Todhunter, who has spent the past 45 years either whipping-in to or hunting the famous Blencathra foot pack. 'The typical Lakeland terrier was black and tan, wire-haired and quite a tidy size to get about in rocks. Then, the Patterdale appeared, but, nowadays, any fell terrier that's black tends to go by that name. In the old days, we used to devote a whole week to hunting the remotest valleys, where farmers were given first chance to try their own terriers if we had a fox to ground.'

Mr Todhunter points out there are separate classes for Borders, crossbreds, Jack Russells and Lakelands at Cumbrian terrier shows, including Rydal, where a working-terrier certificate used to be a condition of entry. The Blencathra's own sporting-dog show is held in May each year at Threlkeld and offers the silver Squire Crozier Cup as the supreme best-in-show trophy. This was won in 2016 by George Norman's black-and-tan Lakeland terrier bitch Taz.

'My terriers are all workers,' confirms retired decorator Mr Norman, who walks hound puppies for the Melbreak foxhounds and Blackcombe beagles at his home on the Cumbrian coast. 'Lots of folk mistakenly claim to have a true Lakeland line, but mine go back to the old school. A Lakeland must be long in the leg and have a narrow front to fit between cracks in the rocks; your thumbs should meet when you span the body above the shoulder—terriers with heavy shoulders are non-starters after a fox in a borran. ➢

**‘Long on the leg, narrow and hard as nails’: Pete Smith’s Lakeland terrier Bertie (*left*), with his father Charlie (*centre*) and mother Kim**

‘They need a warm jacket, too. That’s a wiry black-and-tan or red top coat with a dense undercoat beneath. A thin-skinned dog would perish up in the fells.’

Mr Norman isn’t a fan of what he terms ‘pedigree Lakies’. ‘Once the KC recognises a breed, it’s gone out of the window,’ he believes. ‘Pedigree Lakies have poor coats, long, weak heads and over-exaggerated conformation. They were still workable dogs in the 1950s and 60s, but not anymore.’

Pete Smith keeps working Lakeland terriers at his hill farm in North Yorkshire, where he assists the Sinnington with legal fox control, although his dogs also have Patterdale blood. ‘Fell terrier is a loose term used when nobody is sure what they are,’ he jokes, ‘but all fell terriers are long on the leg, narrow and hard as nails.

‘My favourite, Kim, is out of a red bitch owned by the Ullswater huntsman John Harrison. She won’t look at any quarry except fox and I can call her out of an earth, which is unusual for a Lakeland breed—most stay with their fox until it’s dead. Kim sleeps in the house and is good as gold, but she has a brother called Asbo that I wouldn’t trust out of my sight.’

Having owned generations of fell terriers, Dorset fish smoker Mark Firth is only too familiar with the breed’s unruly traits. ‘As soon as a bitch gave birth, she became an absolute head banger,’ he remembers. ‘We now have a Lakeland-labrador cross called Marmite that’s perfect—she’s fast enough to get there, but too gentle to know what to do when she does.’

> ‘Unlike other breeds, fell terriers haven’t become gentrified’

Mr Firth points out that fell and Lakeland types are usually the countryman’s first choice for a working terrier. ‘Unlike other breeds, they haven’t become gentrified,’ he observes. Said to be ‘mad on quad bikes and pigs’, a broken-coated black Patterdale named Porter is an exception to this generalisation. ‘Porter happily attacks the wheels of my quad bike, nips the heels of our pedigree shorthorns and accompanies me when I go running on the fell,’ admits the Yellow Earl’s great-great-nephew Charles Lowther, who believes Porter’s rough coat is a legacy from Lakeland descent.

‘I got him from John Harrison when I succeeded my father as president of the Patterdale show. Jack Russells were a bit yappy for my liking and, although fell terriers have a reputation for being aggressive at times, Porter is a regular visitor to my pub near Penrith and is very good with people.’

Charlotte Campbell owns a Lakeland-Border cross that she obtained after putting her hand into a nest box and picking up a rat instead of an egg. ‘Ted was the first small dog I’ve ever owned,’ she explains. ‘When he arrived, I carried him around in my coat like a baby. He grew up to be absolutely brilliant and killed all the rats—I was so excited that I kept the body of the first one for a week.

‘The only trouble was, as soon as he’d polished off the rats, he started on the hens,’ Mrs Campbell confesses. ‘He now concentrates on moles and bunnies, but sleeps in my bed at night and regularly runs off. The local gamekeeper is always letting Ted out of snares, but I love him to bits.’

It’s probably just as well that the Campbells’ smallholding adjoins thousands of acres of open Lancashire fell. ‘All the locals know me as the woman with the little dog,’ she concludes. ‘I couldn’t recommend a fell terrier more highly—but they can be hard work and need lots of exercise.’ You have been warned. 🐾

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# The great gundog debate

Whether you own labradors, springers, cockers or a clever mix of all three, debate over which gundog is best has raged for centuries. **Katy Birchall** asks which breed works for you

FEW subjects spark more passion or generate such lively debate as one's choice of gundog. Animated anecdotes, enthusiastic opinion and teasing flow on a shoot day and, if you really want to have some fun, be sure to ask the million-dollar question: 'Which breed is best?'

With so many to choose from today and with each breed boasting its own particular merits, it's a question that's nearly imposs-ible to answer—the sensible response is that it depends on the work you want your dog to do. Rationality aside, the general consensus tends to be that you should get whichever breed the person you're talking to has.

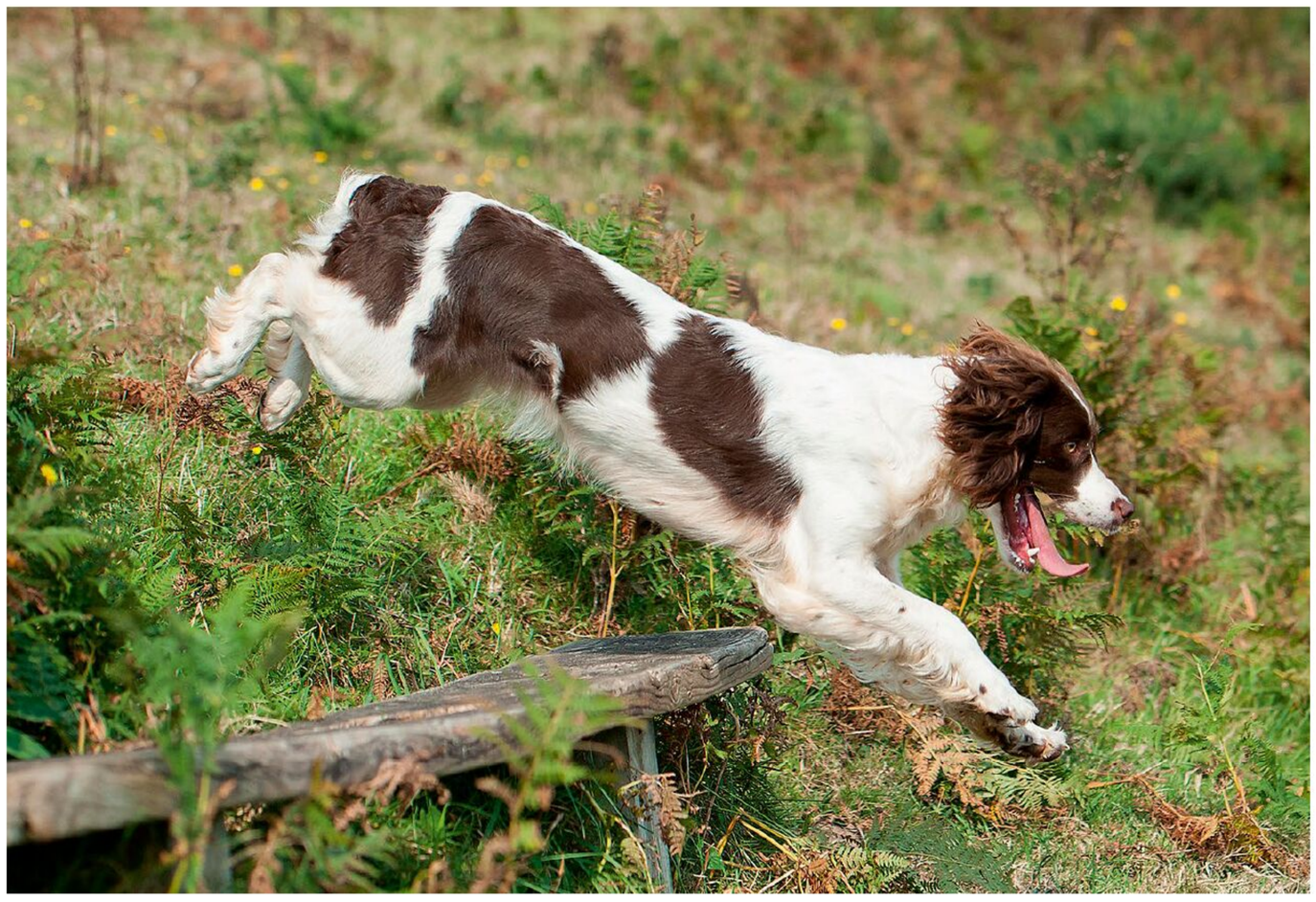
'For someone like me, who doesn't concentrate on his dog on a shooting day, one need look no further than a labrador,' declares the Duke of Roxburghe, owner of a yellow working labrador. 'Always at your side, [they're] loyal and obedient—most of the time. My present dog, Polo, is the best I've had and endlessly in demand with pretty blondes to keep the line going.'

A devoted and much-loved companion, the labrador has many other high-profile fans—the Duchess of Devonshire has several and Queen Elizabeth II was a keen supporter. The latter was the handler of a band of highly respected working labradors and cockers from her kennels at Sandringham.

For Lt-Gen Sir Barney White-Spunner, former executive chairman of the Countryside Alliance, having three fox-red labradors at his side for a day's shooting is what makes it complete. 'I don't always love them when they don't come back, but I forgive them because there's something about that unconditional labrador love that's so constant and dependable,' he admits.

Without question, the labrador is the most popular retriever breed, winning global favour for the ease with which it can be trained, its pleasing temperament and its versatility.

*Facing page:* **Sir Edward Dashwood with his cockers Teifi and Minwear.** *Above:* **Minwear in classic cocker top gear.** *Below:* **Many consider springers to be the most versatile**



*Sarah Farnsworth; Richard Dawson/Alamy Stock Photo*

This brings us neatly to the shooting world's unstinting commitment to the spaniel, in all its incarnations. Versatility is the key characteristic Peter Moxon, the great trainer and *Shooting Times* gundog editor of 40 years' standing, attributes to the English springer. To him, the springer is 'the ideal rough shooter's dog and, for anyone who requires an all-rounder, the breed will appeal as being most versatile'. This hardy, fun dog ticks all the boxes—a natural hunter and retriever, it loves working in cover and water—and has long been the go-to breed for keepers, beaters, pickers-up and guns.

'Initially, I chose English springer spaniels because my father had them, as did my four-greats-grandfather, Coke of Norfolk. We have a Gainsborough portrait of him with ➤

*Country Life Picture Library/TI Media Ltd; Sarah Farnsworth*

*Above:* **Loyal, loving labradors remain the perennial favourite.** *Below:* **The royal choice: Clumber spaniels are steady and hard-working**

three liver-and-white ones,' the Earl of Leicester explains. 'They're certainly easier to spot on a shooting field than black labs.' Lord Leicester has had four springers at Holkham Hall in Norfolk, each a son of the one before.

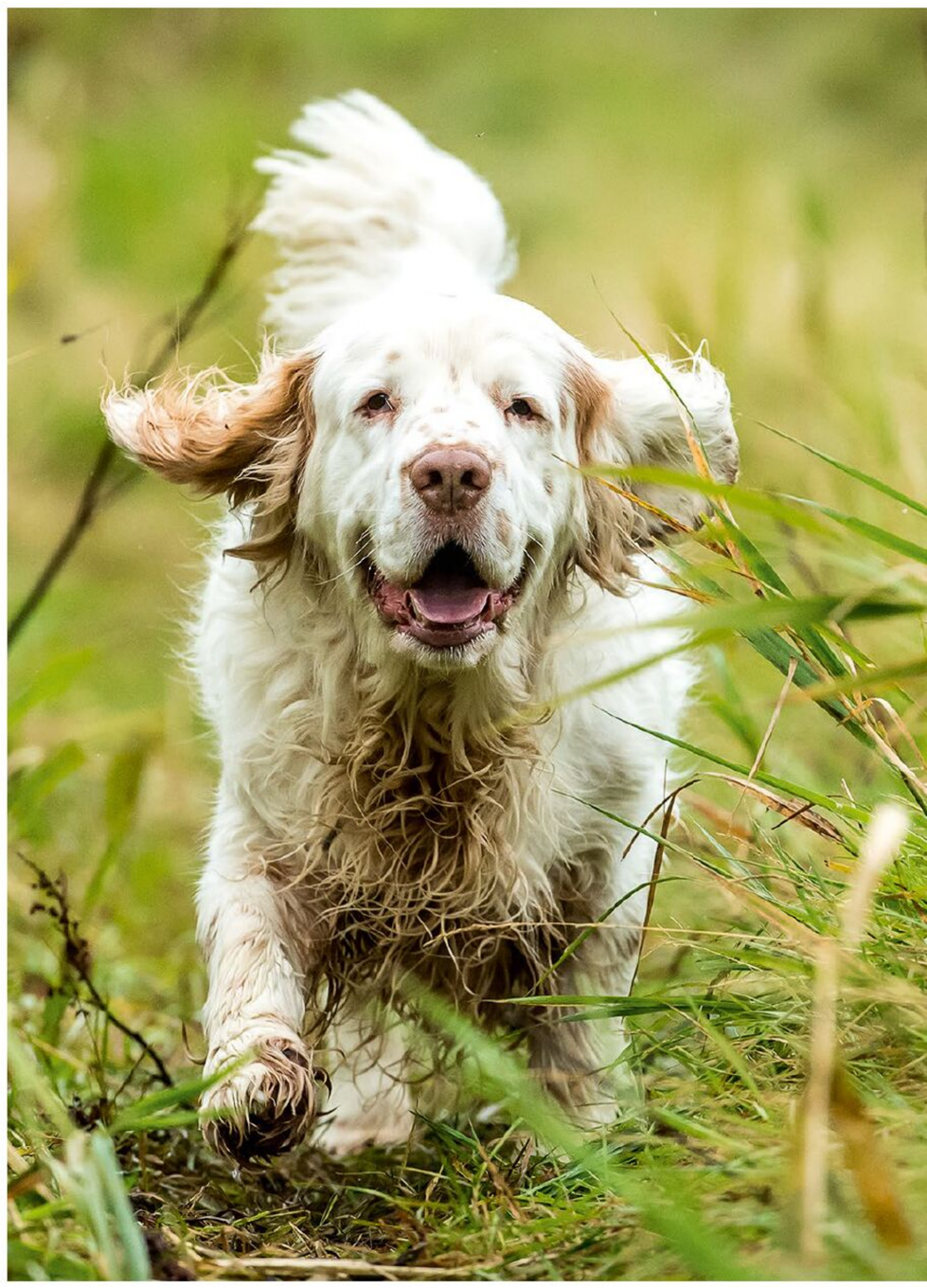
'Our Irish terriers have been given heroic names from Antiquity, such as Hector and Jupiter,' he elaborates. 'The less-favoured kennel dogs, on the other hand, have names of gastropods or other small creatures—Snail, Slug, Shrimp and Scampi. We're now celebrating the birth of Squid.'

These days, the springer has some serious competition in the shape of the working cocker spaniel, which, according to Kennel Club registration figures, is nudging ahead in the popularity stakes. As advocates will happily tell you, the cocker spaniel is equally speedy and willing to please, with an endearing small stature that comes in handy both on and off the field.

'They can fit through the smallest hole in a fence and sit in the car footwell and not be in the way,' points out Sir Edward Dashwood, who's had cockers at West Wycombe for 20 years. 'I just adore them. They're so full of character. Mine are never immaculate gundogs, but, usually, just well enough trained to get by and they are very effective when it comes to bringing back game. They've all retrieved geese, but they really come into their own when hunting small game, such as woodcock. I'd like to say they could sit on a peg without being tethered, but that would be tempting fate.'

The Duke of Northumberland is also a fan of this gundog's charm and boundless energy. 'A cocker is ideal if you draw next to the more competitive sportsman,' he discloses. 'Before they can start to hoover up my birds, my spaniel, Hector, has already picked theirs. He only has one speed—very fast—and would rather pick a runner in the next county than a dead bird nearby. It's no coincidence that he's just had a storm named after him.'

Torn between springer and cocker? Consider, in that case, the sprocker, a breed that's enjoyed a surge of popularity in recent years. 'It wasn't so long ago that spaniels were all the same, divided by weight and colouring, so a sprocker is simply turning the clock back,' explains gundog writer David Tomlinson, who's recently acquired one to join his springer. 'The advantage of an outcross is fresh blood and, with luck, you get the best of both breeds. Most sprockers I've come across have been wonderful hunting dogs.'



‘When it comes to gundogs, it’s less a matter of merit and more a matter of heart’

Sprocker enthusiast Lynda Elliot agrees, emphasising the breed’s impressive record on the field. Her now-retired Rhum was renowned for his ability to retrieve runners. ‘His biggest claim to fame was finding a runner three fields from where it had been shot and bringing it back to his handler,’ she recalls. ‘A big cock pheasant and a wee sprocker wiped the eyes of the others and brought it back. Sprockers are great dogs, whether as a gundog, a pet, an agility dog or even an assistance dog.’ ➤

*Above:* **The Earl of Leicester shooting over a pair of springers, the latest in a long line of Holkham spaniels.** *Right:* **The Hungarian wire-haired vizsla is increasingly popular for its all-round abilities**

*Richard Faulks; Petra Wegner/Alamy Stock Photo*

*Above:* Norfolk terriers Toots, Tinker and Tubby are regulars on the grouse moor with Lord Stafford.

*Right:* **Fox-red labradors are the choice of Lt-Gen Barney White-Spunner**

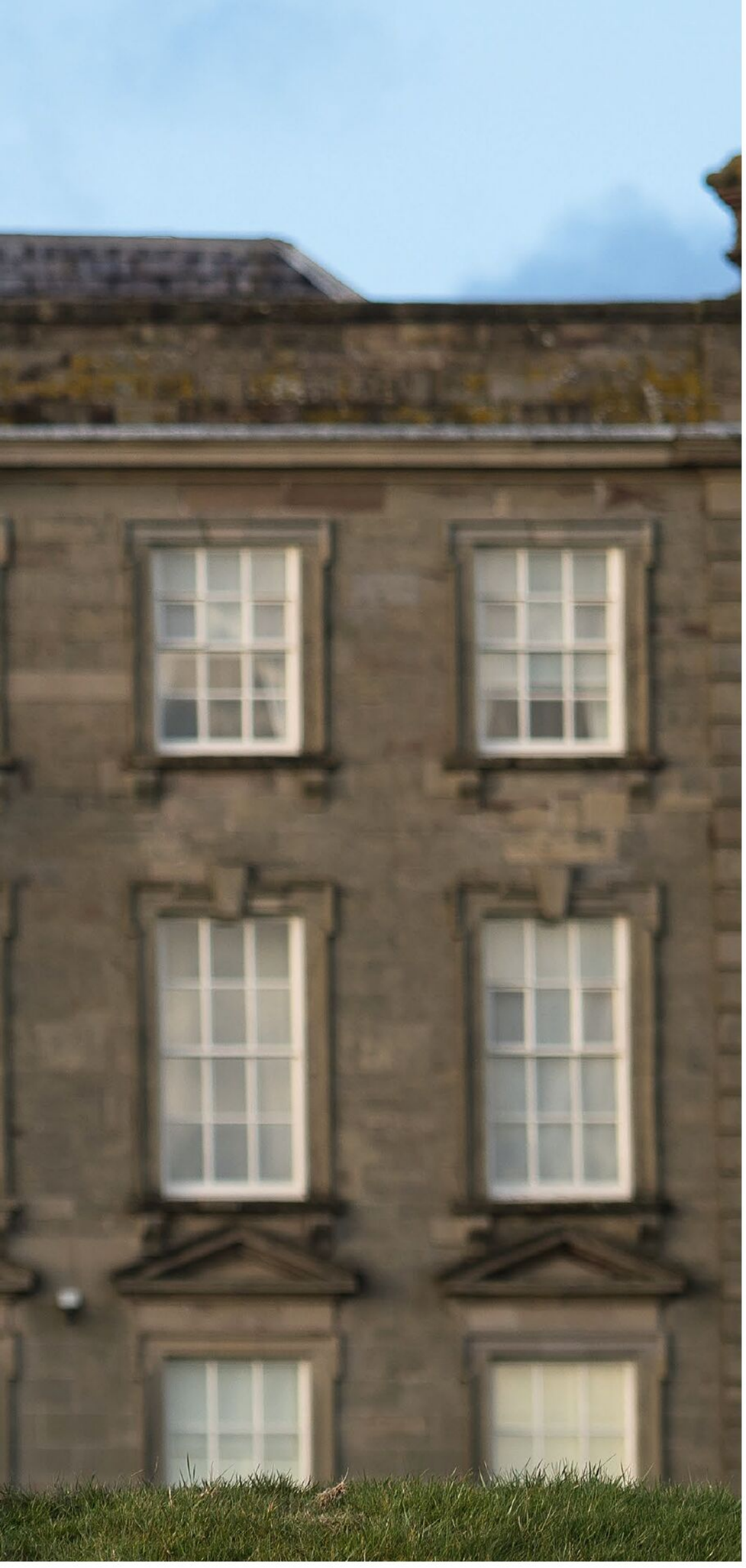
Other spaniel breeds mustn't be overlooked. A win for a Clumber in an any-variety field trial last year (*'Slow and steady wins the race'*, COUNTRY LIFE, *October 25, 2017*) gave the breed a well-deserved publicity boost. Steady working dogs with a good nose, Clumbers have historically been firm favourites with royalty—George V and Prince Albert adored theirs and, today, The Princess Royal is president of the Working Clumber Spaniel Society (WCSS).

'I've had Clumbers for more than 15 years,' says Viscount Gage, who has hosted WCSS shooting days at Firle Place, East Sussex. 'They're excellent companions and enthusiastic dogs.'

Over in the hunt, point and retrieve (HPR) camp, the rising star is surely the Hungarian wire-haired vizsla—a diligent, intelligent and adaptable gundog that's not bad to look at, either. 'Whatever I say about them will be positive,' enthuses Norfolk gamekeeper Tracie Rickman. 'That may be because I've had so many wonderful experiences with them over the past 20 years. The ultimate has to be shooting over my own homebred dogs, whether on the peg, grouse moor, duck flighting or rough shooting, then coming home with that same dog and it's a brilliant family pet.'

The German shorthaired pointer is another majestic dog that's making waves, but, as Lucie Hustler, proud owner of five, will tell you, this isn't an HPR breed for the faint-hearted. 'Put in the work and you get the reward,' she says. 'They can be independent, wilful and bordering on high-maintenance. The reward is a dog that can work relentlessly in all types of country, on all types of game, on every kind of shoot. They can be as good as

*The Field/Andy Hook; Farlap/Alamy Stock Photo; Sarah Farnsworth; Lichfield/Getty*



*Above:* **The Queen was renowned for her skill in working her well trained labradors and cockers.** *Below:* **Ideally, sprocker spaniels combine the best of springer and cocker**

the best labrador, the best spaniel and the best pointer, all rolled into one.'

Finally, it would be criminal to overlook the terrier as a sporting dog. Lord Stafford is the proud owner of three generations of Norfolk terrier—Toots, Tinker and Tubby—which often accompany him shooting. 'They just have tremendous attitude,' he eulogises. 'They're obedient and they love the day. On a grouse moor, they're like dolphins—one moment you see them, the next you don't.' He does, however, add a note on their lack of ground clearance: 'They need a good shower when they get home.'

It would seem that, when it comes to the great and the good's choice of gundog, it's less a matter of merit and more a matter of heart—and nobody knows that better than our very own Lord Tottering. 'At my club, Pratt's in St James's, the staff are always called George and my gundogs are always called Slobber. I'm on Slobber number five now,' he tells me, before confessing: 'I love him more than my wife. Am I allowed to say that?' 🐾

### Who owns which breed?

- **The Earl of Leicester** Springer spaniels
- **The Duke of Roxburghe** Labradors
- **The Duchess of Devonshire** Labradors
- **Sir Edward Dashwood** Cocker spaniels
- **The Duke of Northumberland** Cocker spaniels
- **The Princess Royal** Clumber spaniels
- **Viscount Gage** Clumber spaniels
- **The Marquess of Salisbury** Clumber spaniels
- **Lord Stafford** Norfolk terriers
- **The Duke of Leinster** Korthals griffons
- **The Duke of Buccleuch** Labradors, cocker spaniels and springer spaniels
- **Lt-Gen Sir Barney White-Spunner** Labradors

# Slowly but surely

Eschewing the need for speed, **David Tomlinson** explains why he would always opt for a docile, biddable working gundog over a flighty field-trial champion

Photograph by Sarah Farnsworth

FASTER and faster: increasing pace in sport is something we've come to expect. Tennis players hit balls at speeds that would have been unthinkable just 30 years ago, running the 100 metres in under 10 seconds is now the expectation and not the exception and even marathon runners achieve times that would have been regarded as impossible until recently. Following the same trend, trialling dogs—both spaniels and retrievers—are much faster than they used to be.

Watch an open stake for springers or cockers and the dogs appear to be turbocharged. Although no one could have failed to be impressed by the speed of the top dogs in last year's retriever championship at Ampton in Suffolk, I was decidedly unmoved.

Top trialling dogs might be bred for speed, but they also have to be highly biddable and trainable, which they certainly are. However, handling them takes the sort of skill and natural canine intuition that most of us lack. It's difficult to measure how important a good handler is, yet there's no doubt that their skill plays a major part in a dog's trialling success. Just as a talented jockey brings out the best in a horse or a skilled driver a racing car, a leading trialling dog is a high-performance athlete that requires a gifted handler to control it.

There's no doubt that recent years have seen the increasing use of top trial dogs at stud. Puppy buyers pay a premium for red ink

(field-trial champion or FT Ch) in a pedigree: I've seen cocker pedigrees in which virtually every dog was either an FT Ch or a field-trial winner.

Many gundog pundits argue that an input of top trialling blood will do nothing but enhance a dog's ability in the shooting field, which is true to a certain extent—it's much easier to train a dog to the gun that's been bred from working stock rather than one that lacks it. Truthfully, however, many of us prefer a solid and reliable worker over a high performance and often hard-to-handle animal.

> "My spaniels appear to be decidedly pedestrian compared with modern dogs"

Many—possibly most—shooting people want a retriever or spaniel to be a pet for 345 days a year and a shooting or picking-up dog for the remaining 20. Most of us would prefer a docile, biddable animal that wants to please, not a retriever that relishes 500-yard blind retrieves, nor a spaniel that can hunt an entire wood in the blink of an eye.

We also like dogs that can work on their own initiative, using their common sense and instinct to find the fallen bird. One of the criticisms of modern trialling dogs is that, although they handle beautifully, even at long range, they depend far too much on their handler and not enough on their nose.

For evidence of this, you only have to go to a retriever trial and watch the handlers. Several, you will note, will be wearing white caps rather than the more traditional tweed hats. The white cap (removed from the head and held like a flag) is a handling aid, used to gain the dog's attention and change its direction at long range. Handlers without one will probably have a handkerchief for the same task. I've never seen anyone use such aids on a proper shooting day.

It's no coincidence that the most successful gundog handlers have an extraordinary ability to remember exactly where a bird has fallen and to handle their dog onto that very spot. It's great to watch, yet has very little relevance to a shooting day. You've enjoyed a good drive and know that you have eight birds down, but can you remember where each one fell? The answer is usually no, with many of us hoping that our dog has marked them better than us and will be able to find them with only minimal help.

The top trialling spaniels are spectacular to watch as they're so fast and furious. They rarely run for long, yet have the ability to gallop at the same blistering pace for 15 or 20 minutes. I've owned and worked English springers for more than 30 years, yet my spaniels appear to be decidedly pedestrian when compared with modern trialling dogs. It's a bit like comparing a production car with its rally-prepared competition version—the two may appear remarkably similar, but their performance can hardly be compared. It's also true to say that the former is much easier, more forgiving and pleasant to drive.

Although my spaniels may never have been fast, they have been fit and able to hunt non-stop all day. I would argue that most shooting people want a spaniel with genuine endurance, not a short-haul sprinter. The latter is fine if you have three or four spaniels, working each one in turn, but sprinters aren't that much use to the one-dog man.

Trialling spaniels are specialist animals, as they aren't ideally suited for picking-up, either. Here, you don't want a dog that hunts like a demon despite the fact that there's not a hint of scent, rather one that will use its brain to adjust its speed and use its nose to find the fallen bird. You also require a dog that will hunt with a minimum of handling. Those trialling spaniels that I've seen worked very successfully as picking-up dogs invariably have exceptionally talented handlers, too.

Some years ago, I spent a day picking-up on a grouse moor with a handler who was running eight golden retrievers. All the dogs were of show breeding and none would have been fast enough to impress or get into the awards at a retriever trial. Despite this lack of working blood, these retrievers performed impressively and required little handling. I doubt if they missed a bird all day. It was a reminder that, for most of us, a relatively slow and methodical dog is best. 🐾

IN the summer of 2019, Lorraine Kelly invited 100 guests and their dogs to join her at London's ITV studios in a bold attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the most dogs sitting down simultaneously for 30 seconds. The presenter's Border terrier, Angus, was naturally a principal focus for the cameras. 'Of course, all the dogs did it beautifully and sat down together,' Miss Kelly recalls. 'That is, except for Angus, who stubbornly refused to sit until the time was up. That was when he plonked himself down on his bottom with a cheeky grin.'

This brazen mischievousness is a charming quality of the Border terrier, one of many that has won the breed a legion of devoted fans. Energetic, affectionate and bursting with character, this hardy little dog has a nose for adventure and the courage to follow it. Not to mention its fetching good looks: intelligent eyes, V-shaped ears, an otter-like head and that quizzical expression—it may not appreciate the compliment, but the whiskery Border is nothing short of adorable.

> 'This hardy little dog has a nose for adventure and the courage to follow it'

Miss Kelly was introduced to Borders 16 years ago, when her cameraman husband, Steve Smith, was working on the television show *Vets in Practice*. 'He asked the vets what breed they would recommend. We wanted a little character that would need lots of exercise and bring joy to our lives—they all told us to get a Border terrier.' Their first, Rocky, was 'an absolute delight' and, when he passed away six years ago, the family was devastated. 'We waited until 2017 to bring Angus into our family and he is now the beating heart of the house,' she says fondly. 'Borders are clever and funny, but also gentle and wise—I adore their curiosity, loyalty and fearlessness.'

It was the breed's active nature that caught the eye of former tennis world number one Sir Andy Murray, who has two Borders, Maggie May and Rusty. 'My wife, Kim, and I wanted dogs with lots of energy,' he explains. 'We both enjoy walking and the countryside, so they give us a reason to get out every day. They are great family dogs—we have four young children and both dogs are very gentle ➤

**Here comes trouble: Alfie, Dora and Maude, owned by club president Ronnie Irving**

# ‘Essentially a working terrier’

Comedic and affectionate with endless energy, it’s not hard to see how Border terriers steal hearts, be it Lorraine Kelly’s or Sir Andy Murray’s –but beware the prey drive, warns **Katy Birchall**

**Photographs by Sarah Farnsworth**

*Above:* **On a mission: Maude and Alfie.** *Below:* **Sir Andy Murray with his pair.** *Facing page:* **Lucy, one of Mr Irving's faithful friends**

with them, despite having to put up with quite a lot.'

A quick glance at the two-time Wimbledon champion's Instagram profile confirms his devotion to these plucky terriers—dotted among the tennis images are heartwarming snaps of him relaxing at home with his dogs. In 2012, Maggie May and Rusty delighted the nation when a picture popped up on social media of the two wearing his Olympic medals.

'They're inseparable,' Sir Andy admits. 'Everywhere one goes, the other isn't far behind. They're also incredibly versatile. If we want to chill out, they're the perfect size to cuddle up with on the sofa, but if we want to go on long walks or play in the garden with the kids, they have the energy of 10 dogs.'

Bred in the 18th century, when farmers and shepherds needed game little working dogs to help root out vermin, the Border earned its name from its association with the Border Foxhounds—running miles all day with the hunt, the daring terrier was relied on to bolt a fox that had gone to ground. In 1920, the Kennel Club (KC) recognised the breed and it began to grow in popularity, its working characteristics passionately protected by its devotees—the official breed standard still reads 'essentially a working terrier'.

An article on Borders appeared in a 1930 issue of *The Field*, stating, 'gentle and affectionate in the home, they delight in waging war on foxes, badgers or any sort of vermin that are the hereditary foes of all the terrier tribe'—the piece was fittingly titled 'Little Warrior Dogs'.

'Borders were originally working dogs,' emphasises Tony Wrenn, chairman of Border Terrier Welfare (BTW) and owner of four examples of the breed. 'Once they've decided they're going after something, they don't stop—it doesn't matter how good you think your recall is—and they'll take as much exercise as you can give them. Rosie, my 17 year old, will still walk a mile and a half most days.'

Mr Wrenn first fell in love with the breed in the 1970s, when he offered to do some dog-sitting. 'My ideal of a dog in those days was something fairly substantial, so I wasn't exactly comfortable with the idea of being seen walking my friend's strange little terrier. But, after two weeks, I was extremely reluctant to give it back,' he laughs.

As BTW continues its tremendous work rehoming terriers in need and providing support for owners, Mr Wrenn highlights the importance of researching breeds before you buy. 'In some respects, Borders are their own worst enemy, because they look so cute, but they can have some serious attitude,' he cautions. 'Anyone who knows anything about terriers will be aware they have a tendency to be on the feisty side. Borders have a huge prey drive, which can be challenging. Potential owners should know that they do like a bit of mischief.'

They can also be in the habit of performing Houdini-like escapes, something Ronnie Irving, president of the Border Terrier Club, knows all too well. Alfie, one of his six Borders, has often embarked on unauthorised quests from home. 'He jumped over the fence on one occasion, and they can get under fences, too, if they have long enough to dig,' Mr Irving sighs. 'A secure garden is essential—if they get on the scent of something, they're off. We've had to put in new fences to Alfie-proof the place. Once, the bin men picked him up a mile away.'

Mr Irving's grandfather got his first Border in 1923, opting for the local breed when ➤

*Camera Press; Lorraine Kelly*

## Bordering on perfect

**• One of the first mentions of the Border was in an 1882 journal, stating that the terriers found in Westmoreland and Northumberland were small, active and exceptionally brave.**

• The Border's courage was acknowledged in the 1897 *Encyclopaedia of Sport*: 'They are sent into most dangerous places amongst rocks and peat moss drains from which they sometimes do not return, so determined are they in pursuit of their quarry'.

**• Commissioned by Edward VII in 1907, Carl Fabergé produced sculptures of the animals on the Sandringham estate in Norfolk—two in the collection are Border terriers, although it's unclear to whom the dogs belonged.**

• Regional names include the Reedwater terrier and the Coquetdale terrier. The breed standard today reads 'capable of following a horse, combining activity with gameness'.

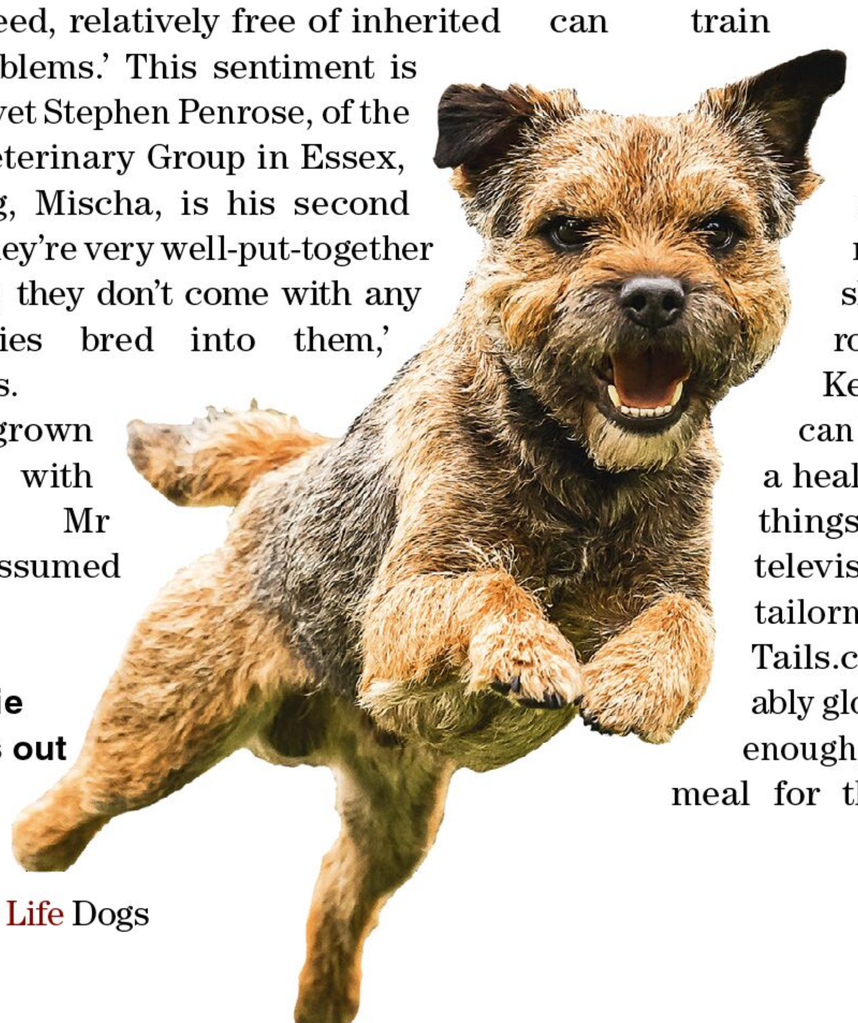
**• More famous fans of the breed include Sir Elton John, Eva Green and British vet and writer James Alfred Wight, better known by his pen name, James Herriot.**

*Above:* **Wise and whiskery: the appealing face of Border terrier Alfie.** *Below:* **Presenter Lorraine Kelly afloat with her beloved Angus**

he worked as a station master at Riccarton Junction, a remote village in the Borders with no road access. 'I didn't really have the option to not be involved with Borders,' Mr Irving admits. 'My father bred, showed and judged the breed, as did my uncle. I met my wife through them, too—her mother founded the Dandyhow Border Terrier kennel.'

They are an appealing dog, he adds, because they're robust, a handy size and they haven't been exaggerated: 'They are a pretty natural breed, relatively free of inherited health problems.' This sentiment is echoed by vet Stephen Penrose, of the Penrose Veterinary Group in Essex, whose dog, Mischa, is his second Border. 'They're very well-put-together little dogs; they don't come with any abnormalities bred into them,' he enthuses.

Having grown up with retrievers, Mr Penrose assumed he'd end up with one, but when he was called out to a Border having trouble giving birth, he mentioned to his wife that it was a breed worth considering due to its excellent temperament. 'Later that morning, she called me at the surgery to inform me she'd spoken to the owner of the Border I'd helped and had bought one of the pups,' he laughs, now a fan of the little dogs for life. 'Borders are lovely, hardy and faithful; they have such presence. There's only a degree to which you can train them, which I find rather endearing.'



**Boing! Alfie never runs out of energy**

Border terriers are very low maintenance, although it's worth noting that their coats should be stripped roughly twice a year. Miss Kelly reveals that Angus can be prone to dry skin, but a healthy diet has improved things. As the star of the television advert for tailormade dog food company Tails.com, he looks suitably glossy on screen—funnily enough, crunching his bespoke meal for the cameras was one command he was happy to obey. 'He always cheers me up. I honestly don't know what I'd have done without him during these strange times,' the presenter concludes. 'There's nothing quite like coming home to his enthusiastic welcome.' 🐾

*The Border Terrier Club (www.theborderterrierclub.co.uk); Border Terrier Welfare (www.borderterrierwelfare.co.uk)*

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FUTURE

# Make mine a labradoodle

## In the past 30 years, this well-mannered crossbreed has stolen our hearts, yet the man responsible has likened it to Frankenstein's monster. **Kate MacDougall** finds out more

SOME things go together. Cheese and wine. Fish and chips. Torvill and Dean. The most successful pairings are the ones where each side brings out the best in the other, the combination of two separate entities creating an arguably superior whole.

In the world of dog breeding, the pedigree has always been the pinnacle: the pure bloodline, the refined heritage, the breed standard. Take the labrador—few would dispute its universal appeal and pre-eminence in the canine world. The breed is consistently voted number one in this country and across the world. This is a dog that is so, well, dog-like, that it's hard to imagine why anyone would want to tamper with it, bar the elimination of any hereditary health concerns.

Yet, a little over three decades ago, when a blind woman in Hawaii was in need of a guide dog that didn't aggravate her husband's allergies, the Royal Guide Dog Association of Australia decided to pair a labrador with a standard poodle to solve the problem. It was an unprecedented but enterprising alchemy that raised more than a few purists' eyebrows at the time. Service dogs were categorically pedigree and preferably labradors, and this new creation was consequently seen as little more than a mutt.

**The dog that launched 1,000 breeds: Sultan, the original guide labradoodle**

However, the mutt in question, Sultan, not only matched the working and social skills of the labrador, he also retained the intelligence, agility and low-shedding coat of the poodle and turned out to be an exemplary guide dog. He was an outright success and, with the help of judicious rebranding, it wasn't long before labradoodles became a big hit. They have been climbing the popularity charts ever since, alongside other hybrids such as the cockapoo, sprocker and schnoodle, thanks to the gradual recognition that two halves can sometimes make an enhanced whole.

'They really are the most fantastic, versatile dogs,' declares Kate Singer, general manager of Lorfords Antiques in Tetbury, Gloucestershire, and labradoodle devotee. 'I would absolutely recommend them, even to someone who has never owned a dog before. They're so amenable and friendly.'

Miss Singer has bred from her standard black poodle, Gwenna, three times, with each of the litters being snapped up fast. She owns two of Gwenna's labradoodle sons, Scrumpy and Fella, as well as miniature poodle Saskia. 'The poodle is highly underrated, in my opinion,' Miss Singer continues. 'They are such fun, intelligent dogs and full of character. There aren't many labradors you could trust in a warehouse full of antiques, but with Gwenna and my labradoodles, there would never be a problem.'

Equally at home among the furniture and Old Masters of Lorfords as they are in the wilds of their home county, Herefordshire, Miss Singer's labradoodles are testament to the breed being a great all-rounder. ➤

*Below:* **Toy labradoodles, like teddy bears come to life.** *Facing page:* **Full of joie de vivre: the dogs' exuberance is infectious**

*Left:* **Kate Singer with Scrumpy and Fella in Lorfords Antiques Hangar, Tetbury.** *Above:* **Labradoodles love walks, retrieving—and mud**

The combination of the two breeds seems to temper the traits of each. The labrador's penchant for gluttony is balanced by the poodle's fussiness, the waggy-tailed labrador bounciness offset by the poodle aloofness and hauteur. The labradoodle seems to retain the best of both breeds—the loyalty, vitality and cleverness—and less-appealing aspects of their temperaments can often be diluted,

> 'The labradoodle retains the best of both breeds–the loyalty, vitality and cleverness'

a delicate distillation that conscientious champions of the breed, such as the UK Labradoodle Association, hone with care.

It may, therefore, come as a surprise that the 'inventor' of the dog, Australian Wally Conron, deeply regrets his creation. He has likened the cross to Frankenstein's monster, which most labradoodle owners feel is a bit of a stretch, even on the naughtiest of days. Mr Conron's misgivings stem from the breed's ever-increasing popularity and the resulting surge in 'designer' crossbreeds—as with all sought-after dogs, unethical breeding tends to be not far behind.

'Certainly, we have noticed that crossbreeds such as the labradoodle or cockapoo are becoming increasingly popular, and they can make good family pets, if bred responsibly,' says Bill Lambert, senior health and welfare manager for the Kennel Club (KC). 'Our concern is that too many breeders are making false promises about how their dog will turn out—by their nature, crossbreed puppies will inherit a random combination of genes, so you can't accurately predict their size, exercise and grooming needs or temperament.'

Sultan, Mr Conron's prototype, was bred from a pedigree labrador and a standard poodle, commonly known as an F1 or first-generation cross. Plenty of labradoodles on the market today are second generation, F2s, the result of a labradoodle crossed with another one or a labradoodle with a different poodle cross. This can not only produce health issues, but they often fall short of the buyer's expectations—a large percentage of labradoodles aren't even hypoallergenic.

Luckily, for the vast majority of owners, temperament is far more important than shedding or allergens, with most choosing the breed for its sociability, good humour and for being the perfect family dog.

'I think that's what first drew me to them,' admits Anna Miller, who lives on a farm in Dorset. 'I would see them pile out of cars with their families, bouncing around the kids. They looked so loving and fun.'

As well as being home to a large herd of Hereford and Aberdeen Angus cattle, a flock of New Zealand Suffolk ewes, an assortment of horses, pigs, poultry and children, ➤

## Cock-a-doodle-do

• They can come in a wide variety of colours, including chocolate, cream, apricot and silver, as well as three different sizes, according to the poodle they are bred from.

• **The labradoodle replaced the Scottish terrier as a token in the 2006 version of Monopoly.**

• In 2013, a large golden labradoodle called Charles the Monarch was mistaken for a lion in Norfolk, Virginia.

• **The average life span of a labradoodle is 12–14 years.**

## Mixing it up

Thanks to their many admirable breed traits, poodles—be they standard, miniature or toy—are now being used in a whole host of other hybrids.

• **Bassetoodle (basset-hound mix)**
Resembling a basset in a curly wig, these dogs should be calm and affectionate, but may inherit the hound's stubborn streak.

• **Bernedoodle (Bernese mountain dog)**
Intelligent with a happy-go-lucky, slightly goofy attitude, but be aware that they may grow to alarming proportions.

• **Cockapoo (cocker spaniel)**
Perhaps the best-known crossbreed after the labradoodle, a successful cockapoo litter combines intelligence and spirit with sturdiness and work ethic.

• **Goldendoodle (golden retriever)**
Often highly sociable and trainable, goldendoodles have made successful guide, service, therapy and sniffer dogs—as well as family pets.

• **Maltipoo (Maltese)**
This small dog should be active, yet affectionate and gentle.

• **Pomapoo (Pomeranian)**
Should be friendly and laid-back, with modest exercise requirements. May not enjoy being left alone.

• **Poochon (bichon frise)**
Sociable and playful, with a propensity to be vocal.

• **Schnoodle (schnauzer, *above*)**
Cheerful and intelligent, schnoodles tend to be particularly loyal and protective.

**Miss Singer gives Scrumpy the affection the dogs love**

the farm also hosts summer visitors on a glamping site. 'There were always dogs coming and going with the guests, but it was the labradoodles I fell in love with.'

Mrs Miller decided to put her yellow labrador bitch, Kiwi, to a miniature poodle, and the resulting litter gave the family its pretty and petite labradoodle, Waffle. 'She's completely hilarious,' she laughs. 'She's basically one of the children and absolutely thinks she is the most important member of the house. Kiwi is predictable and straightforward, but Waffle is spontaneous and very silly. The kids adore her.'

Ed Bracher, CEO of Riding for the Disabled (RDA), recalls how labradoodle Alfie served as an excellent confidant to their two children when they were growing up in Oxhill, Warwickshire, particularly in some of the difficult teenage years.

'Alfie listens. He's very patient and he doesn't answer back, of course,' reflects Mr Bracher. 'He's been a great friend to them and to us.'

Although most owners would argue that impeccable manners are top of the breed's list of attributes, the dogs still require training in puppyhood to ensure their innate exuberance can be curbed if necessary.

Watching Jasper Bertram May, 4th Baron May's large chocolate labradoodle, Rufus, launch himself gleefully into a fetid pond on Lord May's Oxfordshire estate is evidence of their ebullience and zest for life. Both the labrador and the poodle are excellent swimmers, and Rufus's rudder-like tail breezes him through the chilly water to retrieve his stick in no time at all.

The labradoodle can also excel in more formal circumstances. Mr Bracher often takes Alfie into RDA offices, where there can not only be other dogs but also visiting dignitaries, making it imperative that he knows how to be on best behaviour.

'They are people pleasers, really,' Mr Bracher believes. 'I think that must be the labrador in them.'

The question that must be asked is why not simply get a labrador or a poodle? A safe, pedigree choice, officially recognised by the KC, with a line that can be traced back through the generations. If you aren't particularly swayed by fashion or a fun name, then why not stick to something tried and tested? 'Well, you're simply getting a lot more dog,' concludes Lord May. Who wouldn't want that? 🐾

*Sarah Farnsworth; Guide Dogs Victoria; Alamy*

# The bloodhound gang

Far from snoozing on a porch all day, bloodhounds are highly active pack-hunting dogs that require 'slobber cloths' when in company, discovers **Katy Birchall**

*'And hark! and hark! the deep-mouthed bark*
*Comes nigher still, and nigher!*
*Bursts on the path a dark Bloodhound,*
*His tawny muzzle tracked the ground,*
*And his red eye shot fire.'*
*From 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' by Sir Walter Scott*

STRIKINGLY handsome and with an unmatched sense of smell, the bloodhound is a remarkable working dog, both in appearance and ability. The noble expression of this tall, muscular, long-eared hound, 'characterised by solemnity, wisdom and power', as worded by the Kennel Club (KC), befits a breed with such a rich and ancient heritage. Recorded in Britain as early as the 14th century, the bloodhound has been an esteemed hunting companion to nobility, a formidable tracker of poachers and criminals and a lofty muse, its dignified countenance and trailing capability romanticised in art and literature. This notable ancestry makes the bloodhound's place on the KC's vulnerable list all the more disheartening, with only 36 pups registered in 2020.

'They were certainly a prestigious breed in previous centuries,' affirms Keith Long, chairman of the Bloodhound Club. 'The bloodhound has the honour of being the first breed to feature in the KC Stud Book and is one of the few breeds where the same stock is seen in both show and working arenas, ensuring they are fit for purpose. It is steeped in history, and part of the pleasure of owning the breed is the sense of its ancientness.'

Acquiring his first bloodhound as a teenager, Mr Long has never looked back, although he admits there are certain drawbacks to the breed—a 'slobber cloth' is an essential accessory, should an owner want to keep their friends. However, Mr Long insists the bloodhound's qualities far outweigh the drool hazard. 'They are a joy to own, affectionate with both humans and other dogs,' he enthuses. 'Whenever you're out with your hounds, they will have their noses to the ground, following the scent of those who have gone before. I've spent hours in the field handling, assisting, judging or spectating and am still in awe of their ability to find their human prey.'

'It is steeped in history, and part of the pleasure of owning the breed is the sense of its ancientness'

The bloodhound is believed to be descended from the St Hubert hounds, brought over to England in 1066 by William the Conqueror. In John Caius's text *Of Englishe Dogges* (1576), bloodhounds are established as 'the greater sort which serve to hunt, having lips of a large size and ears of no small length', going on to detail their superior ability to trail man, in particular tracking cattle thieves in the Borders—they became known as the 'sleuth hound', popularised in tales of cross-Border feuds and romances such as the work of Sir Walter Scott. By the early 1800s, numbers had dwindled and the breed was largely saved by the introduction of dog shows in 1859. The majestic look of the bloodhound—the large, narrow head, heavy wrinkles and soulful eyes—appealed to those in the show ring and caught the attention of eminent artists, Sir Edwin Landseer in particular.

Working trials for the breed were introduced in 1898 and continue to this day, consisting of four stakes: novice, junior, intermediate and senior. Covering a vast area of countryside, a line is walked by someone who leaves behind a scent article, such as a glove, on a flag—the hound is later brought to the flag to follow the natural scent of the walker. For a novice, the trail is a mile long and half an hour cold, whereas senior hounds must tackle a three-mile trail that is two hours cold.

Only five bloodhounds in history have won the title of dual champion, taking the top spot in both the show ring and working trials. One of them, Brumbies Dulcimer, belonged to Sue Emrys-Jones of Marksbury Bloodhounds. 'Dulcimer was absolutely super,' recalls Mrs Emrys-Jones. 'She was a nice-looking hound and loved her hunting. She's the only bitch to have won dual champion.'

An advocate of the breed for more than 30 years, Mrs Emrys-Jones has lost count of the number of bloodhounds she's ➤

owned. ‘They like companionship and I’m used to having up to 10 hounds at once, so I feel guilty only having one at the moment,’ she says. ‘There’s no grey area with a bloodhound; either you can live with one or you can’t. They’re untidy, not particularly obedient and need a lot of exercise. If they’re bored, they will chew.’

Tracie Howie, owner of seven bloodhounds including two puppies, concurs: ‘They’re partial to guttering, remote controls, phones, reading glasses. You need a good sense of humour. It’s like having a toddler—but one that can eat iPads.’

Accrediting the breed with giving her a ‘new lease of life’, Mrs Howie was instantly smitten with her first bloodhound, Daya. ‘That was when the love affair started. She was a real diva—they’re characters; a brilliant, unique dog. We walk about three hours a day and I take them all together,’ she says, confirming that stops can be par for the course, so that fellow walkers can admire the pack. ‘You can’t risk taking them off lead. If they get on the scent of something, nothing will distract them. I’ve almost been

*Above:* **Steady there: Evelyn Burnside and Rob Manley with handfuls of the Hound-seeker Bloodhounds.** *Below:* **Irresistible, yet only 36 puppies were registered in 2020**

All things wise and wonderful, wrapped up in a long-eared, soft-coated package: Trinity of Houndseeker Bloodhounds

pulled into a ditch before—there's no strength like that of a bloodhound when it bolts. It's like holding onto a horse.'

For Rob Manley and Evelyn Burnside of Houndseeker Bloodhounds, it was love at first sight when they spotted the breed at the Midland Game Fair—they now share their home with 14 of them. 'They're hard work, but make wonderful pets,' Miss Burnside enthuses, confessing that their bloodhounds enjoy sofa privileges. 'Sometimes, we end up on the floor, but we wouldn't have it any other way.'

Although Miss Burnside's hounds enjoy outings to the beach—'some will try to drag us into the sea'—it's in the field where they're most at home. 'Watching them pick up the scent to be tracked, continue to work that scent and get to the end of the line, even in the most atrocious of weather conditions, is so rewarding,' she says.

All of the dogs compete at trials, including a rescue whose previous owner couldn't cope. 'After socialisation and training, she soon showed that she was a lovely hound who had simply been in the wrong environment,' Miss Burnside explains. 'Bloodhounds require a special home with people who understand the breed—they are a large, strong-willed and clever dog.'

The Bloodhound Club secretary, Sam Clark of Farlap Bloodhounds, emphasises that thorough research is essential for prospective owners. 'The KC recommends buying a puppy from a breeder on its "Assured Breeder Scheme" and that bloodhounds are BVA scored for hips and elbows, as well as BVA eye tested. Responsible breeders also do heart testing and testing for degenerative myelopathy as routine,' she outlines. 'There is a great misconception that it's a lazy breed that sits on American-style porches, quietly snoozing—this couldn't be further from the truth. They are a highly active, pack-hunting breed and come with all the characteristics you'd expect from such traits.'

After one of her dogs helped to locate a neighbour's pet gone astray, Miss Clark founded K9 Search Dogs, a charity based in the South-West offering the bloodhounds' assistance in tracking down missing dogs. 'Training is almost identical whether hunting human or dog, but I prefer to use different hounds for different quarries to reduce the risk of changing lines,' she explains.

Miss Clark is proud to report many success stories, including the tale of a missing beagle that was tracked by her hound to the cliff edge of a flooded quarry. 'In a moment of rather foolish bravado, my partner used ropes to scale the quarry face to a tiny ledge, where the poor beagle was shivering after being stuck for 24 hours—we got the dog up safely, back to the very emotional owner waiting at the top.' 🐾

## Nothin' but a hound dog

- **The first recorded use of 'bloodhound' appears in the 1350 poem *William of Palerne* or *William and the Werewolf*.**
- During the 16th century, if a man refused to let a trailing bloodhound in pursuit of a thief enter his house, he was held to be an accomplice.
- **In 1888, two bloodhounds, Barnaby and Burgho, were trialled by the Metropolitan Police to assist in hunting Jack the Ripper, yet despite successful demonstrations, the hounds weren't deployed in the case.**
- Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was greatly inspired by the breed's sleuthing potential, often alluding to it in his work—in *The Sign of Four*, Holmes himself is likened to a 'trained bloodhound'.
- **Queen Victoria owned and showed bloodhounds.**
- Fred, a Tennessee sheriff's bloodhound (*above*), made headlines in 2021 when he successfully tracked a six-year-old girl to an abandoned shed—a month after she had disappeared.

*Getty; Matt Limb OBE/Alamy; Millie Pilkington*

# Wired for fun

Obedience isn't always a virtue of the appealing, cheerful wire fox terrier, but **Charlotte Cory**, owner of Bessie, is smitten

*Grossemy Vanessa/Alamy Stock Photo*

**When you look this good, there's no need to behave—or so wire fox terriers believe**

EVERY April, there's a dog walk in Brighton with some 100 wire fox terriers. It's always funny to see so many together, but the funniest thing is watching the faces of people walking the other way when they realise they're about to be deluged by a tidal wave of dogs. When the pack assembles for a group photograph, onlookers can't believe their eyes.

As an owner of one of these curly-haired, square-cut dogs that look as if they belong on a child's walking aid or in a toy box, it's an occupational hazard to be stopped with cries of 'I had one as a child, on wheels!' or 'My great aunt bred them', invariably followed by 'You don't see many of them these days'.

These indubitably old-fashioned dogs were developed in hunt kennels, notably the ducal ones of the Beaufort, Belvoir and Berkeley, and their sporting instincts are strong. In 1923, Capt H. R. Phipps, an MFH and renowned terrier judge, was out riding when he was enchanted by the sight of a handsome wire bitch, but the owner, a Mr Foster, refused to sell either her or one of her five puppies.

> 'Wessie bit the postman and shredded trouser legs, but Hardy adored him, buying him a radio to listen to Bach'

However, in time, Foster changed his tune because the puppies had developed into incorrigible fighters—he feared they might kill each other—and Capt Phipps became the owner of Ch. Talavera Simon, a legendary dog in wire-breeding circles. Initially, Simon's appalling show-ring behaviour negated his outstanding conformation, but he became a reformed character and most of today's wire fox terriers can be traced back to him.

As with Simon, the wire is not one of the most biddable breeds. They're not eager to please—they depend on their looks to do that—and know what they want out of life. Pulled off an abandoned chip spotted on the pavement, they will remember its precise co-ordinates and strain at the lead—and they often need to be kept on a lead—ever after when approaching that location.

Their single-minded determination is remarkable, as is their curiosity, energy and endless *joie de vivre*; wire fox terriers stay puppyish all their lives. They're eminently trainable, but make it clear—by jaunty body language and mischievous tail wags—that it's up to them whether they execute your orders or not. ➤

**The author, pictured with Bessie, is devoted to the breed, yet wise to its 'loopy behaviour'**

## The rough with the smooth

The sporting fox terrier, bred to locate foxes when they went to ground, now has two separate Kennel Club (KC) breed standards (wire and smooth haired). Both were developed in the 19th century, with strains of Old English terrier, black and tan terrier, greyhound and beagle, and both breed standards demand a dog that is 'on tiptoe of expectation' and with a 'friendly, forth-coming and fearless' temperament.

However, the wire has significantly outstripped the smooth in numbers; in 2017, 82 smooth-haired puppies were registered with the KC compared with 668 wire; by the third quarter of 2018, the ratio was 99 to 432. The smooth is now classified as a vulnerable native breed.
www.thefoxterrierclub.co.uk
www.wirefoxterrierassociation.co.uk

It's a cliché, but it's true: you never really own one: it owns you. As they're so intelligent, they're probably happiest when taught tricks or even complex routines. Troupes of them used to tour the country putting on shows and theatrical performances at provincial theatres and seaside piers.

Responsible breeders give would-be adopters of puppies a hard time; I'm not sure we would have passed the examination to take Bessie home if I hadn't made it clear that she would be my third and I had no illusions.

> 'If he can squirm in anywhere he is not wanted, he feels his day has not been wasted'

My first two were rescue dogs, with entrenched habits. Rufus was rehomed when his previous owner had a baby—he went berserk at the telephone ring and used his powerful bounce to leap up and bite the nearest bottom. Little Maudie was sweet-natured, but would fight ruthlessly over food. With Bessie, we knew any loopy behaviour had to be curbed before it took hold.

With their good looks and enormous personalities, you can see why these particular terriers have played major roles in detective films and fiction. Hergé was notorious for giving Tintin's dog Snowy (Milou in the French) sticky-up ears instead of the breed's neatly folded envelopes, but, in fact, the dog's ears will indeed prick up at the slightest provocation.

The popular 1930s 'Thin Man' film series, starring William Powell and Myrna Loy, had Asta upstaging the famous sleuths at every turn and invariably stealing the show.

The comic recalcitrance of Montmorency, the canine member of J. K. Jerome's famous boat trip, is perfectly characterised: '[His] ambition in life, is to get in the way and be sworn at. If he can squirm in anywhere where he particularly is not wanted, and be a perfect nuisance, and make people mad... then he feels his day has not been wasted.'

In old age, Thomas Hardy owned a notoriously badly behaved dog that dominated life at Max Gate. Literary pilgrims would find Wessie running up and down the dining table vying with them for food. He bit the postman and shredded trouser legs, but Hardy adored him, buying him a radio so he could listen to Bach (his favourite) and giving him a luxurious eiderdown in his study.

When Wessie died, Hardy wrote two of the most moving poems ever penned to a dead pet, with the same gut-wrenching, lyrical wistfulness (but none of the guilty regret) with which he mourned his first wife.

When Edward VII died, his devoted terrier, Caesar, refused to leave the coffin. Postcards of Caesar in the funeral procession established the breed's reputation for undying fidelity.

Agatha Christie had one called Peter, star of *Dumb Witness* as Bob. The book's dedication says it all: 'Dear Peter, Most faithful of Friends and dearest of companions, a dog in a thousand.' She drew on the breed's penchant for endless play to enable Poirot to solve his mistress's murder. The relationship between the detective's foil, Capt Hastings, and Bob is wittily delineated—only a writer of Christie's brilliance and daring could give voice to an animal so accurately.

I think of these dogs as typically English. I was walking Bessie in France recently when I heard a passer-by saying to his friend in French: 'If I were ever to get another dog, it will be one of those. But I am too old. They are hard work.'

His companion nodded and replied: '*Certainement, ils sont très Anglaises.*' By which, I'm sure, he meant very stylish. 🐾



*Mary Evans Picture Library/Thomas Fall; Charlotte Cory; Chronicle/Alamy Stock Photo*

*Facing page:* **Always ready to play, the wire fox terrier is expert at tricks.** *Right:* **Tatters Chasing the Car by Cecil Aldin**

# Do your ears hang low?

Incorrigible and exasperating, vocal yet always entertaining and seemingly almost human, the basset hound is a force of nature, says devotee **Flora Watkins**

**Photographs by Millie Pilkington**

WHEN cartoonist Alex Graham was asked to create a strip about a thinking dog for the *Daily Mail* in 1963, the obvious choice was a basset hound. They are a 'unique dog', he said, after Fred Basset and his wry observations had ambled into the nation's consciousness, with a 'rather expressive face'.

Their Queen Anne legs, mournful eyes and ears that sweep the ground make the basset a gift to cartoonists and advertising executives alike. They are absurdly endearing; as I write, our two resident Hush Puppies, Wellington and Churchill, lie slumped across my feet, emitting the sort of rumbling, 80-decibel snore that would earn my husband a sharp dig in the ribs at 2am. Yet they merely elicit an indulgent smile.

Fellow basset slave Orlando Fraser is 'completely blind' to his dog Basil's faults, according to his wife, Clementine. 'All the stealing, messing and thievery goes past him and is forgiven,' she says.

Mrs Fraser bought Basil for her husband last Christmas, after years of hearing about childhood memories of his mother Lady Antonia's basset hound. Curiously, she adds, 'Orlando came back from London the other day and said, "I went through the albums with Mummy over dinner and the awful thing was, Bertie the Basset died three years before I was born!"' This is a testament, Mrs Fraser feels, to the strength of personality contained within that comical body.

Basil is adored by the Frasers' four children, aged between six and 14, with his trailing ears —'He was like Dumbo when we first got him' —and impresses with his 'amazing ability' to steal food. 'He's my "pre-wash",' Mrs Fraser reveals. 'He gets right into the dishwasher and licks the whole thing from top to bottom.'

> 'They'll hunt really well–and then go home and watch *Strictly*'

As do my own basset hounds, Basil comes from hunting lines, so he is a more svelte and streamlined model than the Kennel Club (KC) basset. They came to England from France in 1866 (*bas* means 'low' in French), imported by Lord Galway. He sold them to Lord Onslow at Clandon Park in Surrey, who is thought to have been the first person in Britain to have hunted the hare with a pack of bassets.

The breed's tenacity at holding a line, their deep-scenting abilities and voice mean that 'if you see a pack of bassets go well, it's the best hunting you'll see,' says Rosie Wilson, master of the Four Shires Bassets. 'But when it goes wrong, it can go very wrong,' she adds ruefully.

Early aficionados included Sir Everett Millais, son of the Pre-Raphaelite painter Sir John and an 'influencer' of his day, and Princess Alexandra, who established a pack at Sandringham in the 1880s, making the breed very fashionable. Yet, within a few decades, a story sadly familiar to so many pedigree dogs had emerged. The type of basset that found favour in the showing world had become a caricature of the breed; heavy, stuffy and cumbersome. For this reason, the Masters of Basset Hounds Association was formed in 1912, to encourage the breeding of hounds purely for hunting.

The Frasers' Basil was bred by Andrew Sallis, master and huntsman of the Kimblewick foxhounds. His bassets are 'remarkably fast creatures, considering they don't look built for it'. Piglet and Pumpkin sleep on the children's beds and refuse to be walked out with the foxhounds. 'I think they're concerned they'll be put outside,' ponders Mr Sallis. 'They have very much staked their claim to being house dogs and think they're superior.'

As with all bassets of my acquaintance, 'no food is safe' with them. 'They have no filter and eat things other dogs would never ➤

*Clemmie Fraser; Alamy*

*Preceding pages:* **Rosie Wilson with five noble denizens of the Four Shires Bassets.** *Above:* **Two-year-old Christian, Miss Wilson's nephew, shares a look of love with Leroy.** *Facing page:* **The hunting basset is more athletic, with shorter ears, than the showing type**

countenance: lettuce, tomatoes,' he adds. (Wellington's red-letter days include a whole Victoria sponge and a sirloin of beef that had been taken out of the oven to rest before carving, but he isn't averse to wet wipes and Play-Doh.)

Although they have hunting blood, Piglet and Pumpkin are purely pets. Yet, unlike most foxhounds and beagles, hunting bassets can go from field to fender very happily when they retire. Four Shires bassets have been rehomed 'all over Oxfordshire', says Miss Wilson (including five with her, 'although only three sleep on my bed'). Churchill was given to us by the Albany and West Lodge at the age of five as—rather like his namesake—he proved too independent to hunt within the pack. He is the perfect family pet, endlessly tolerant of the baby pulling his ears (the trade-off being the ease with which he relieves her of snacks).

Two Albany bassets—one, Isla, a daughter of Churchill—have slotted into their new lives just as smoothly in the Master's Lodge at Selwyn College, Cambridge. Roger Mosey, a former editorial director of the BBC, acquired YoYo soon after arriving in 2014, followed by Isla in 2018. YoYo is a local celebrity. Traditionally, the Master's Lodge has had a cat rather than a dog. 'Technically, I didn't need permission, but I thought it would be nice to ask the College Council,' Mr Mosey explains. 'The secretary thought it would be amusing to put in the minutes that the Master was given permission to keep a "Very Large Cat".'

Later that year, Mr Mosey wrote a diary for the *New Statesman*. 'There was some quite controversial stuff in the first part,' he recalls. 'Then, at the end, I put something about dogs taking over Cambridge. It completely took off,' he continues, slightly bemused. 'The story was in the *Mail* and *The Times* and YoYo was "Woof of the Week" on Sky News.' Even today, Mr Mosey is stopped in the street and asked 'Is that the famous Selwyn College cat?' YoYo is an answer in the QI quiz book and there's a picture of her on a tea towel of Cambridge.

Somehow, it's hard to see the story of the 'Selwyn College cat' taking off in such a way had YoYo been yet another black lab. There is something about a basset hound that seizes the imagination. For one thing, they're quite rare. Although the popularity of Fred Basset resulted in a six-fold increase in KC registrations during the 1960s, that has since tailed off. When I'm out with Welly and Churchill, older people often exclaim: 'Oh, you don't see many of those nowadays.' There are only eight packs of registered basset hounds in the UK, compared with some 60 of beagles.

I'm biased, of course, but I don't think any other breed comes close in terms of character and traits that seem almost human. 'The weight of them—emotional and physical—is very strong,' thinks Mrs Fraser. Mr Mosey's Isla is 'incredibly loving', although less outgoing than YoYo, who greets May Ball revellers wearing a little bow tie and 'mooches around at their feet, hoping they drop a canapé'.

They're extremely vocal dogs—the cry of a pack of bassets on a trail is extraordinary, deep and resonant. Welly enjoys opera and sings along to Radio 3, although his tastes are more Classic FM; his favourite aria is the duet from *The Pearl Fishers*. He has an extensive vocabulary of grumbles, growls, sighs and whines: a 'chatty basset' is our family code for someone with too much to say for themselves.

The Duke of Edinburgh called horses 'great levellers', but I think it's the basset. At the Four Shires' hound-racing fundraiser, Churchill is a non-starter in the rehomed bassets' race: a classic example of their 'Well, what's in it for me?' attitude.

Caspar Withen, who whips in on Saturdays, reveals 'some very good hounds simply refuse to live in kennels. On the day, they'll hop out of someone's car and they'll hunt really well—then go home, sit on the sofa and watch *Strictly Come Dancing*'.

Note that the *bassets* watch from the sofa. Their owners probably sit on the floor. Indeed, as I worked, Churchill inveigled his way onto the sofa beside me and, after an hour of his sighing, heavy breathing and leaning on me, I've given up and moved to the desk. Actually, I'm hoping to catch *Strictly* myself. I just need to make him a bacon sandwich first. 🐾

**No deeper clean available: the Frasers' Basil demonstrates the basset pre-wash cycle**

## The hound of the bassetvilles

**• There are five breeds of basset: the smooth-haired basset hound, basset bleu de Gascogne and basset Artesien-Normand (*below*), plus rough-haired basset fauve de Bretagne (*far right*) and basset griffon Vendéen, grand and petit.**

• A petit basset griffon Vendéen called Jilly won Crufts in 2013 (*right*).

**• They're not keen on water and try to avoid it.**

• They do like to roll in unspeakable evil. My friend Zoe still retches as she recalls her fauve, Manon, rolling on a dead seal on Holkham Beach in Norfolk. Tea-tree shampoo has got me through 12 years of basset ownership.

**• As puppies, they can be difficult to house train, advises Andrew Sallis. 'They are fine once they get there, but are pretty hard-headed'.**

• Telling a basset off in the conventional way won't work, according to Brian Wilson, author of *A Bother of Bassets: A History of the Working Basset*. The huntsman should 'shame' the miscreant: 'Lift the hound nearly off the ground at its shoulders and speak in an angry tone, looking the hound in the eyes. Let other hounds see this shaming taking place'.

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# Clash of the titans

With the age-old rivalry between labradors and spaniels–whether springer or cocker–showing no sign of abating, **Katy Birchall** asks the dogs themselves which breed makes the pawfect companion in the field

Illustrations by John Holder

## The labrador

OH, hard luck! That was a close one, you almost hit it. Next time, eh? Keep that chin uuuuuuup… oops! Sorry, didn't mean to yawn. Must be the early start. Nothing to do with the workload. I'm perfectly happy waiting for those big retrieves coming my way, any minute now.

Was that your stomach rumbling or mine? Now, I don't mean to complain, but are you sure my breakfast was as big as it should be? I only mention it because I feel famished and it wasn't all that long ago. I'm using a lot more energy these days, remember, what with all this peg work, so I wonder if that should be reflected in my portions. Food for thought.

> 'Are you drooling? Oh, sorry. It's me. How embarrassing. All this talk of sandwiches'

Now, here's a corker! Right overhead! You've got this! You—

Ah. Bad luck. He was a nimble fellow and I may have put you off with all my tail wagging. Don't lose faith, something will… is it just me or is Bracken over there on peg seven smirking? The nerve! Don't you take any notice of him, he's not worth your time. At least you're not a dark-yellow labrador parading about as a fox red. And I don't want to spread rumours, but I saw him snaffle a sandwich from a child's plate on the shoot last Saturday. Poor child. A mature Cheddar with Branston pickle on thick white bloomer, gone in a flash…

What's that dripping on my paw? Is it raining? You might want to do up your coat. Hang on, that's not rain. It's drool! Are you drooling? Oh, sorry. It's me. How embarrassing. All this talk of sandwiches. That reminds me, you're getting casserole for supper. I saw the dish out on the side this morning. Just think of that, a hearty casserole followed by a snooze together by the fire after a hard day's work. We'll have earned it. Perhaps that will be a good time to discuss the sofa rule. I don't want to put my paw down, but I think there's only really space for the two of us. She's always yakking away on her phone and leaves hairs everywhere.

Here we go! At last, the beaters are doing their job. Excellent, come on! GOOD SHOT! Don't stop there! YES, EXCELLENT WORK! Oh, very good, very good! You are by far the superior shot among these amateurs! Yes, reload quickly, the other guns need you. If you don't bag these birds, no one will! I'm ready to retrieve when you say the word.

Oh! I didn't realise I was creeping forwards! Sorry, the excitement, you see. What's that? 'Sit', did you say? Got it. No need to tell me twice. I'll sit right here. Right by your side all day.

# The spaniel

WHAT was that? Did you see that? I saw something move in those brambles! Nobody panic, I'm on it! I've got it surrounded! I'll go this way. No, wait. This way. No, back this way. No, the other way. Right, there's only one thing for it. Straight through the middle. SMASH! There you go! Watch them fly! They never saw me coming. You think thorns can stop me, Feathers? Think again!

Right, where now? Got it. Among the trees we go. Now we're talking! I'll take the lead, you bring up the rear. I've got it covered. Two pips on the whistle? TURN! Look at us on the hunt. This is the life, isn't it? Out in this—TURN—woodland, having the time of our lives. These are the best days. In the beating line together, working side by side, and I—TURN—feel sorry for those peg dogs, having to sit there for ages, as we get to have all the fun, but then I suppose—TURN—someone has to do it—and FLUSH! Watch it go. Beautiful.

> 'Nobody panic, I'm on it! I'll go this way. No, wait. This way. No, back this way'

Back to it! What was I saying? Oh, yes—TURN—I remember! Peg dogs. Poor things, stuck on a lead, twiddling their whiskers, waiting for—TURN—the signal to get on the job, as we're here constantly having fun, always on the—TURN—move, but not every dog is cut out for this kind of work—FLUSH! Up, up and away. Ready to go again?

Wait. I smell something. This way. No, we should go in this direction, trust me. When have I ever been wrong? This nose is top notch. And I'm on the scent of something, no doubt about it.

HARE! GO, GO, GO! I'll get him, don't you worry! On his tail! He's fast, but I'm faster! I'm right behind him! I've got him! I... where did he go? Oh well. What a rush! That was fun, eh?

Where are you? I've lost you. Oh, there you are! Miles behind. Look, everyone's sniggering at you. Chop, chop! What are you yelling? Hang on, that's a few too many pips on the whistle, I can't keep count. Look, I'll come to you. Wait there. You look a bit flushed, a little red in the face. You need to watch your blood pressure. Oh. Are you sure it's time for the lead to go on? There's a lot more work to be done and—all right, then. You're in charge. I could use a break, but only a couple of minutes. I'll catch my breath, then we can get back to it.

Hey? How about a pat on the head or a scratch behind the ear? Go on, no one's looking. It will make you feel better. There you go. You see? You're smiling now. I told you. Thanks—I think you're a bloody nuisance, too.

# Brains, beauty and bird sense

Developed by the 4th Duke of Gordon, the handsome black-and-tan Gordon setter has fallen out of fashion as a gundog, but deserves our attention as a potential pet, discovers **Matthew Dennison**

Photographs by Sarah Farnsworth

THAT'S a really big spaniel, isn't it?' and 'Your dog's a rottweiler', comments more than once addressed to Siobhan Whiteway on walks with her three-year-old Gordon setter bitch, Ember, give an accurate indication of how rare and unrecognised this handsome black-and-tan gundog has become. Last year, the number of Gordon setter puppies registered nationally by the Kennel Club (KC) sank to 172. By contrast, in the same period, the nation's favourite dog breed, the French bulldog, notched up more than 30,000 puppy registrations. On the eve of the bicentenary of its breed standard being formalised—in 1820, by Alexander, 4th Duke of Gordon, who lent the breed his name—the Gordon setter is well on its way to becoming the gundog British owners forgot.

> 'Anyone who has witnessed a Gordon setter at work is unlikely to forget the beauty of the sight'

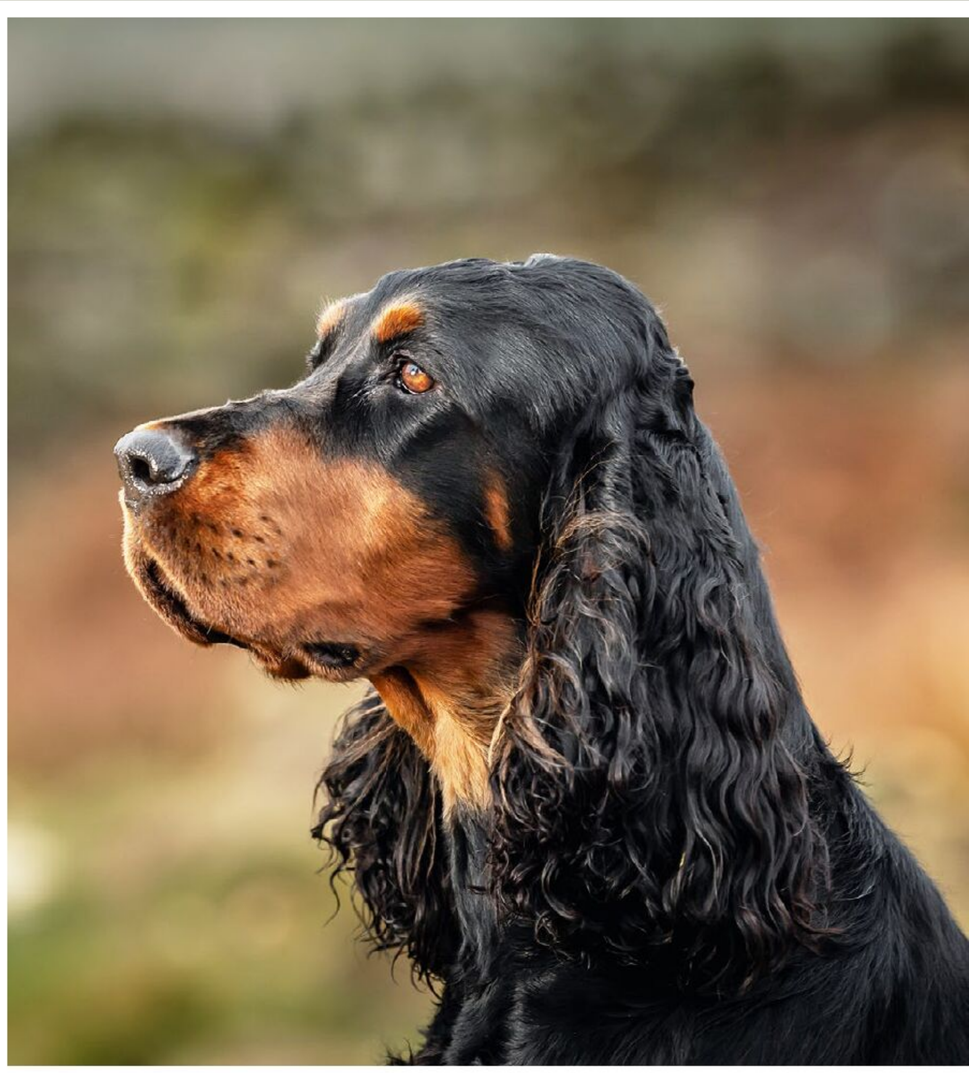
It's a sorry outcome. Anyone who has ever witnessed a Gordon setter at work, pointing in the field or running with long, liquid strides across open parkland, is unlikely to forget the beauty of the sight: the dog's silky coat like moulten liquorice splashed with amber, eyes set, nose aquiver, a long plume of tail extended, the feathering of legs, tail and underbelly suggesting a surprising lightness to this heavyweight of British setter breeds.

Noble both in appearance and heritage, the much-neglected Gordon setter is an attractive and lovable pet for owners capable of providing appropriate training in what can be a protracted puppyhood and who are willing and able to exercise energetic dogs bred for the outdoors.

'The Gordon setter does need exercise,' owner of four—and co-owner and co-breeder of the only two dual-champion setters (show ring and field trials) in UK history—Jean Collins-Pitman states. 'They need to be able to gallop freely.' Yet they are also, she notes, comfort-loving, cosy and comfortable dogs: 'Gordons are very loving and very friendly.'

One of her younger dogs, three-year-old Denver, even shows surprising lap-dog instincts. Despite weighing more than five stone: 'Every night, he has to come and sit on my lap. I can see I'll reach an age when Gordons are just too big for me!' ➤

**Lords of the hill: with silky coats and long legs, Gordon setters are a noble breed**



These fond and affectionate animals—described as 'endearingly biddable' by Peter Sandiford who, with his wife Christine, currently has 14 Gordon setters, and by Miss Whiteway as having 'very sweet, gentle natures, especially in any family environment involving children'—have always been among Britain's minority breeds. In the past century, their popularity peaked in the 1980s; in 1908, however, the KC had registered only 27 Gordon-type puppies.

*Above:* **Vegas commands the sofa after working on the moor, where the breed's easy gallop eats up the miles.** *Facing page:* **Show and field-trial winner Jean Collins-Pitman works Denver, aged three**

Their current doldrums are not new, but, like a number of former working dogs that have failed to achieve mainstream appeal, the Gordon setter faces the threat of a dwindling breeding pool, with potential implications for breed wellbeing. Enlightened breeders have imported bloodstock from overseas, notably the US. Today's Gordons may be rare, but, despite concerns about a tendency to hereditary hip dyspasia, they are currently a robust bunch.

Genetically, the Gordon's origins are close to those of English and Irish setters, which they resemble in all but colour. Although the KC first recognised the breed as recently as 1924, a distinctive setter strain, associated primarily with the kennels of the 4th Duke of Gordon at Gordon Castle in Moray, had been known much longer to sportsmen, especially to readers of *The Field*. In that magazine, its merits on the grouse moor and in shooting partridge and pheasant were repeatedly extolled by a handful of committed admirers through the second half of the 19th century. As a young man, the Duke was an enthusiastic sportsman, perhaps more attached to his dogs than to his forceful and ambitious wife, Jane Maxwell: in 1764, at the age of 21, he was painted by Pompeo Batoni at the end of a day's sport attended by a sighthound and a dog of pointer-like appearance, liver and white in colouring.

The strain of setter developed in the Duke's kennels before and after his death, in 1827,

reflected his sporting preferences and requirements. Unlike today’s Gordon setter, it was a predominantly white-and-black dog with sparse tan markings, the prevailing paleness of its coat a deliberate contrivance to increase its visibility on moor and hillside. This was the Gordon setter described by a visitor to Gordon Castle in 1862: ‘Originally the Gordon setters were all black and tan… Now all the setters in the Castle kennel are entirely black and white, with a little tan on the toes, muzzle, root of the tail, and round the eyes. The Duke of Gordon liked it, as it was both gayer and not so difficult to back on the hillside as the dark-coloured.’

The present breed standard restricts white markings to a small spot on the chest, although predominantly white Gordons, as favoured by the Duke, continued to be bred and shown into the previous century.

The first creation dukedom of Gordon became extinct in 1836, with the death without male issue of Duke Alexander’s elder son, the 5th Duke. In 1972, however, the current Marquess of Huntly, a direct Gordon descendant, embraced family tradition with the purchase of a Gordon setter called Gomer, after another relative, press baron Gomer Berry, Viscount Kemsley.

‘I don’t believe I have ever seen a more beautiful dog and he was hugely admired when he stood still long enough to be appreciated,’ Lord Huntly remembers. Gomer’s imperviousness to his master’s training shortened his stay in the family: ‘I had him for about a year. He travelled on those long legs at high speed, oblivious of calls from me to return—only the offer of food would turn his head. Whole pheasant pens were cleared, herbaceous borders trashed and five-bar gates cleared with consummate ease. I couldn’t go on.’

Gomer was rehomed to a hotelier in Aberdeen and happily settled down, his boisterous puppyhood behind him. For Lord Huntly’s part, ‘still I cannot pass the breed in the street without the happiest memories, despite my failings as an owner’.

Most owners’ stories are cheerier. Gordons have traditionally been considered more intelligent than other setter breeds and ➤

**Home doggies: Gordon setters need copious exercise, but they are more than happy to collapse on Mrs Collins-Pitman's sofa**

Mrs Collins-Pitman labels her four, which she keeps alongside a labrador and an English setter, 'amazingly intelligent dogs and very, very obedient. The breed does show a streak of independence, connected to its intelligence, but with successful training, such adaptability'. She has taken all her dogs with her when staying with friends and all have resided with her in hotels with no untoward outcomes. Her view is unequivocal: 'I couldn't be without them.'

This feeling of joy and delight in their dogs defines the small band of Britain's Gordon owners. It is the case that changes in shooting practice in the past century and a half have impacted on the breed's popularity as a working dog—the majority of today's guns prefer hunt-point-retrieve breeds—but, for those sufficiently interested, the setter is an adroit and accurate worker, as well as a charming pet. Miss Whiteway, a second-generation owner, dwells on their 'winning charm' and loyalty.

For Mrs Collins-Pitman, who is married to a former keeper, the Gordon is 'the epitome of the "fit-for-function" dog', but also an 'intensely loyal, often one-family dog, very friendly, but eager to protect your home, with just occasionally an appearance of aloofness towards strangers'.

In the kennels at Gordon Castle 150 years ago, up to 37 setters were recorded at one time and current owners also testify to the breed's gregariousness. Mr Sandiford describes the many Gordons he and his wife have owned and bred since 1975 as 'very happy in units of two' and Mrs Collins-Pitman's quartet of 10-year-old Dallas, five-year-old Raina, three-year-old Denver and two-year-old Vegas live side by side in companionable amity.

The picture that emerges is of a breed that, like all dogs, is a composite of its charms, quirks and idiosyncrasies, and one many owners would do well to reconsider. Despite cautioning against a Gordon setter as a first dog, Mrs Collins-Pitman, who remains in touch with the owners of every dog she sells, has no reservations in the case of experienced owners. Her own life has been inestimably enhanced by this breed, the wellbeing of which she has so successfully championed.

It is now time for new converts to embrace these distinguished, handsome and kindly setters. 🐾

## Ready, setter, go!

**• One of the men responsible for importing Gordon setters to the US was Daniel Webster, Secretary of State from 1841 to 1843 and again from 1850 to 1852.**

• Like that of other setters, the Gordon's genetic make-up includes spaniel, hound and pointer antecedents.

**• The 4th Duke of Gordon's first sporting love was falconry and he may have been among the last owners of the now-vanished High-land greyhound, before transferring his loyalty to black-and-tan setters.**

• An observer once commented of the Duke of Gordon's dogs: 'They are not fast dogs, but they have good staying powers and can keep on steadily from morning until night. Their noses are first class and they seldom make a false point. When they stand, you may be sure there are birds'.

**• The breed's attributes were traditionally summed up as 'brains, beauty and bird sense'.**

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# Small legs, big personality

**Kate MacDougall** gets the lowdown on dachshunds and discovers why their tiny stature doesn't impinge on a 'sausage' dog's zest for life

IT wasn't long after getting our now three-year-old miniature dachshund, Henry, that he tracked a muntjac in nearby woodland. We were on a family walk, children and an elderly Jack Russell in tow, when he suddenly darted forward, nose to the ground, tail thrashing wildly.

He wasn't fast enough to get very close and the enthusiastic barking would have easily alerted most of the deer in the county, but his exuberance and sheer pluck were a real eye-opener. Not least to my husband, Finlay, who, up until that moment, had been distinctly lukewarm about Henry's arrival, preferring dogs with a little bit more leg.

However, watching him weave his tiny body through the undergrowth in pursuit of an animal at least 20 times his size was a revelation. 'Henry's not what I thought he was,' Finlay confessed, which, in many ways, sums up the breed perfectly.

Dachshunds are something of a paradox and often misunderstood. Their diminutive stature, which lends them to the arms and bags of celebrities, leads some to dismiss them as lap dogs. Offered a lap to curl up on, the dachshund will, of course, happily cooperate, but it won't stay there for long.

No matter how many Arran sweaters or Instagram followers a sausage dog has, the indomitable hound gene prevails. Dachshunds —'badger hounds' in German—are a classic example of this group: spirited, loyal and courageous, with an acute sense of smell and a passion for hunting. Smooth, long or wire-haired, miniature or standard, the dachshund is a big, bold dog in a very small dog's body.

Dachshund breeder Di Handy, who lives near Thame in Oxfordshire and has bred and owned standard and miniature dachshunds for more than a decade, ensures that prospective buyers are aware of their personality before committing to one. 'They're not handbag dogs,' she insists. 'They need plenty of exercise and attention.'

Breeders have seen a huge rise in demand for dachshunds, with the Kennel Club (KC) reporting an increase of 112% in the past five years alone, ranking the dog as the fifth most popular breed in the UK last year. Not surprisingly, there is a long waiting list.

## Miniature marvels

- A dachshund was the first official Olympic mascot at the Munich games in 1972.
- **Toto in *The Wizard of Oz* was originally played by a dachshund, but it was later deemed to be too Germanic and was replaced by a cairn terrier.**
- Dachshunds can live well into their late teens, with the oldest one reported to be 25 years old.
- **In Germany, dachshunds are known as *Dackels* or *Teckels*.**
- The smooth-haired miniature is the most popular variety in Britain, followed by the long-haired miniature and, finally, the wire-haired, with both standard and miniature kinds attracting an equal amount of interest.

> 'No matter how many Instagram followers a sausage dog has, the hound gene prevails'

'It isn't a shock that there's been a huge surge in popularity of all types of dachshunds, especially as the trends towards smaller homes and busy lifestyles grow and the breed is regularly featured across social media, TV, adverts and films,' points out the KC's Caroline Kisko. 'They may be small, but they still need mental and physical stimulation.'

Their compact proportions and willingness to be escorted around town make them an excellent urban dog, as long as they get plenty of exercise. Daisy Honeybunn's smooth-haired miniature, Sukha, is as happy trotting through the streets of London as she is at her country residence, The All England Jumping Course at Hickstead, West Sussex.

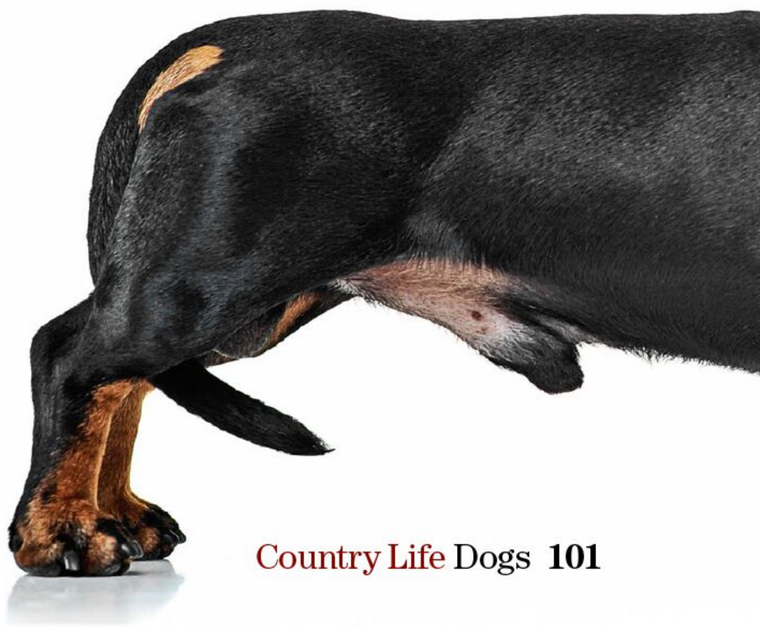
'Like me, I think she's a country girl at heart, but she wouldn't say no to dinner at Scott's,' laughs Miss Honeybunn. Sukha has dined at many of the capital's smartest restaurants, in between mixing with the country's equestrian elite, a dichotomy she takes in her petite stride.

Having originated in Germany in the 15th century, the dachshund was initially bred to scent badgers, their wide-digging paws, long bodies and fierce determination making them perfect for subterranean hunting. As the breed developed into the standard and miniature sizes, the larger dogs continued to hunt badgers and wild boar while the smaller ones began to pursue rabbits and foxes.

By the mid-19th century, the dachshund became a KC-registered breed and quickly rose to prominence thanks to Queen Victoria, the first of many famous owners. Introduced to the breed by her husband, Prince Albert, Victoria owned a number of the dogs throughout her reign, several of which were immortalised in paintings and mentioned in her personal correspondence.

She famously declared that 'nothing will turn a man's home into a castle more quickly and effectively than a dachshund', which is easy to say if you live in a castle. The sentiment is, however, unquestionably true. Dachshunds have a distinctly noble quality, with an aristocratic profile and an innate assurance that their size is no hindrance to achieving greatness. Other royal owners included Princess Margaret, whose favourite long-haired miniature dachshund, Pipkin, was mated with one of The Queen's corgis. The match resulted in the 'dorgi' crossbreed and offspring related to The Queen's dogs Vulcan and Candy.

Despite these regal connections, the breed has seen its fair share of controversy and was almost completely ostracised in the first half of the 20th century. After the First World War, the dachshund was often ➤



*Sarah Farnsworth; Getty*

*Facing page:* **He may be the smallest resident, but Stanley is definitely the commander of the Fraser household.** *Right:* **Long dog: few canines have such a distinctive profile**

used to symbolise and vilify Germany in Allied propaganda. One poster depicts Britain as a strong and solid bulldog, with a weak and lifeless dachshund hanging limply in its mouth with the caption 'Got him!'. To be seen with a dachshund was akin to supporting the enemy and, sadly, some dogs were persecuted.

Fortunately, their forceful personalities and unique silhouette meant they weren't out of favour for long and, with a little rebranding (Americans named them 'liberty dogs' for a time), they trotted back into popularity.

That distinctive dachshund form has not only been a merchandiser's dream—appearing on everything from oven gloves to scarves fashioned in an elongated sausage shape—it's also inspired some of the 20th century's most famous artists, including Picasso, Warhol and David Hockney. The latter's miniature reds were the subject of their own series.

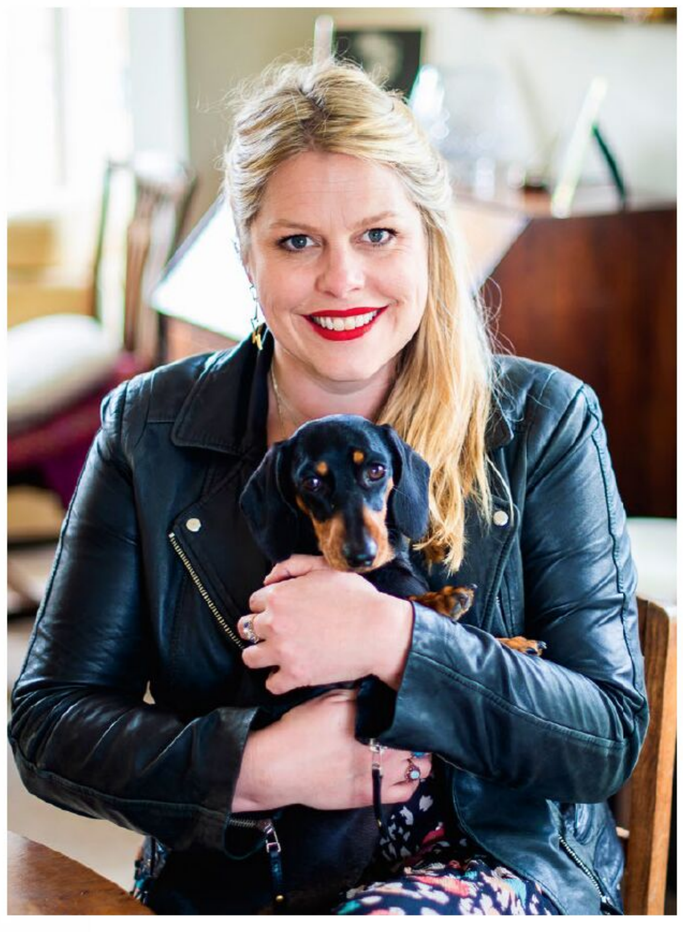
As a first-time dachshund devotee, I'm an amateur in contrast to many owners who were brought up with them as children, before gravitating back to the breed later in life. Indeed, Miss Honeybunn's father, Douglas, acquired their first 'sausage' dog at Ascot racecourse in exchange for a case

> 'Dachshunds have an innate assurance that their size is no hindrance to achieving greatness'

of wine when she was seven. 'The family hasn't looked back since,' she enthuses.

Similarly, the Crichton-Stuart family has four dachshunds in total: two long-haired miniatures that live in Oxfordshire with Freddie and his young family, one that resides with his sister, Katie, in London's

*Left:* **Lady Bracknell would approve: the breed possesses a notably aristocratic profile**



*Top:* **Unfailingly faithful, like all his kind, Stanley is beloved by the extended Fraser clan.** *Left:* **Daisy Honeybunn with short-haired Sukha, who is equally at home in either town or country.**

*Sarah Farnsworth; Getty*

*Arco Images GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo; Di Handy*

*Above:* **Whether long-, wire- or short-haired, standard or miniature, dachshunds will win over even big-dog devotees.** *Left:* **Three bundles of sausage-dog joy for breeder Di Handy**

Eaton Terrace and Gladys, their mother's long-haired miniature, who divides hertime between Switzerland, Chelsea and St Barts in the Caribbean. 'They don't like being left alone,' Freddie's wife, Lenka, points out. 'Gladys is so well travelled because she sulks if she's left behind.'

Some might dislike their tendency for diva-like behaviour, but fans of dachshunds contend that their loyal, affectionate natures make up for any shortcomings. 'I can't imagine getting into a bed now without a sausage dog in it,' confesses Clementine Fraser of her smooth-haired miniature, Stanley. 'They make the most fantastic hot-water bottles.'

Stanley greets me cheerfully when I arrive at the Frasers' Cotswold home, where—despite four resident dogs, including two labradors and a lurcher—he's clearly in charge. Indeed, the little dog sits proudly on his owner's knee, paws firmly placed on the dining table, as the bigger animals circle around him.

As the great-granddaughter of Sir Winston Churchill, Mrs Fraser comes from a notable line of dog lovers, but, unlike her ancestor, she far prefers dachshunds to poodles: 'I'd never be without one now. Stanley is the most faithful friend.'

A tendency to bark, health issues with their spines (intervertebral-disc disease can affect up to 25% of dogs) and their stubborn nature can prove problematic—Mrs Handy says it can take six months to housetrain them—yet nothing beats the joy of seeing those little legs trotting towards you.

I must admit that Henry's training is still a work in progress, but I can confirm that all the effort is absolutely worth it. As my

# Teach your old dog some new tricks

## Long walks might be good for tiring your dog out, but, as **Katy Birchall** discovers, brain games are equally as important when it comes to relieving boredom, anxiety and restlessness for man's best friend

IN the same way that we challenge ourselves, it's important that we challenge our dogs,' explains Tamsin Durston of the Dogs Trust's canine-behaviour team. 'They're intelligent and social creatures, so without mental stimulation can become bored, frustrated and restless. A problem-solving task enriches your dog, directing its energy into something positive.'

When it comes to canine companions, walks are obviously essential, but studies have shown that keeping their brains busy is equally as important. Brain games encourage the natural skills and senses of our four-legged friends, as well as preventing anxiety and boosting their confidence, not to mention how much all that brain work tires them out. 'Physical exercise is only half of the equation when it comes to keeping your dog healthy and happy,' confirms Bill Lambert, head of health and welfare at the Kennel Club. 'It's vital to keep your dog's mind interested and active, as bored dogs can develop behavioural issues.'

> 'A problem-solving task enriches your dog, directing energy into something positive'

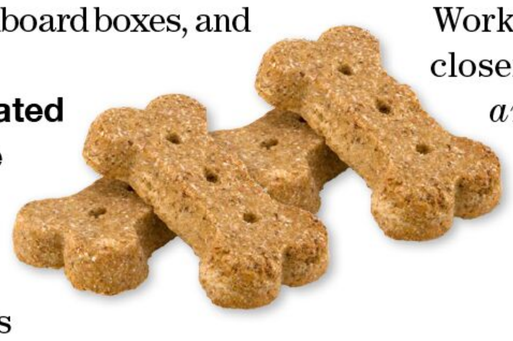
Dogs of all ages, whether they're working or not, can benefit from mentally engaging exercises, and space needn't be an issue—brain games can be played anywhere, from a kitchen to a back garden or a paddock. There really is no excuse not to take a stab at teaching man's best friend some new tricks.

'A simple game to start off with is taking two items, such as cardboard boxes, and teaching your dog to weave round them in a figure of eight,' suggests Mrs Durston. 'If your dog is young, fit and healthy, you can build an obstacle course in the garden—a broom balanced on two flower pots makes a nice jump. Teaching a dog to high five is a lot of fun. Hold a treat in a closed fist in front of your dog. They might sniff or lick your hand at first, but when they paw at it, say your marker word and release the treat. Repeat until they're doing it every time, then attempt it with an empty hand, offering them the reward from the other one. Gradually move your hand higher and eventually hold your hand out in a high-five gesture.'

Nathalie Ingham, canine behaviourist and training manager at Battersea, emphasises that games at home are a fantastic way to keep dogs occupied and entertained in a controlled environment: 'Brain games shouldn't substitute their usual exercise, but work in conjunction with it. They can be anything that gets your dog thinking, from basic training to new tricks.' As most dogs are motivated by food, Miss Ingham recommends tasks that incorporate their daily food allowance. 'If they're on dry kibble, encouragethem to work for their food by scattering it on the floor or in the garden so they have to use their nose to find it.

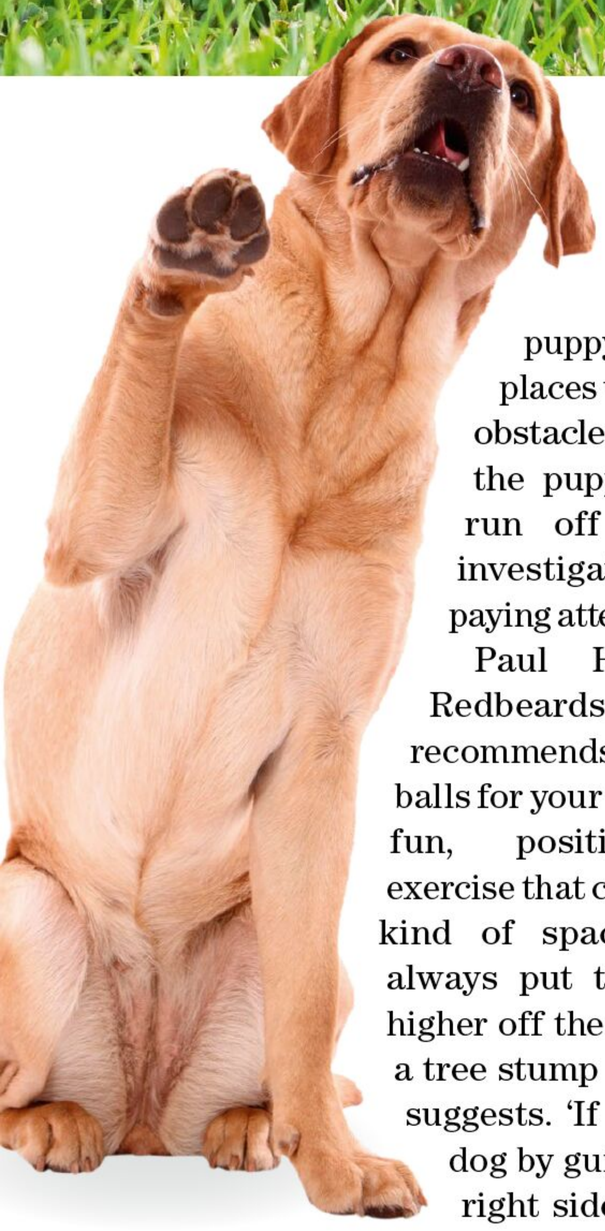
'Another way to keep your dog entertained is to grab a cardboard box and fill it with anything that's safe for your dog to tear up, such as scrunched-up balls of paper. Scatter some dry food in there or pop in a favourite toy, then let your dog dive right in and destroy everything. That one is very popular with terriers,' she laughs.

Working dogs can benefit from training closer to home—in *Gundogs: Training and Field Trials*, the late Peter Moxon acknowledges the advantage of early ➤



**Most dogs are motivated by food, so treats are a useful training tool**

‘It’s wonderful to spend that time engaging with your dog’



lessons on a secluded lawn: ‘Teaching a puppy in a wood, or places where there are obstacles, is trying, as the puppy may often run off to hide or investigate instead of paying attention.’

Paul Harper from Redbeards Gundogs recommends hiding tennis balls for your dog to find—a fun, positive hunting exercise that can work in any kind of space. ‘You can always put the ball a bit higher off the ground, using a tree stump or branch,’ he suggests. ‘If you help your dog by guiding them the right side of the wind, you can watch them catch the scent and see their instinct kick in—it’s lovely to watch them work it out.’

Mr Harper notes that home is the perfect place to practise teaching your gundog to do simply nothing. ‘Most dogs aren’t born to sit still, especially cocker spaniels,’ he smiles. ‘Get your dog to sit longer and longer without moving, rewarding them with praise. Gradually build on that lesson until you can sit them down, go to make a cup of tea and find they haven’t moved when you return.’

Patience training can be incorporated into family scenarios, explains Ben Randall, of Beggarbush Gundogs. ‘There are plenty of wonderful opportunities to train dogs at home and constantly build up a relationship of trust—if my boys go out to pass around the rugby ball, they take two or three dogs. The dogs have to sit and wait, watching them play, and at the end, they get lots of praise and a reward of a retrieve. They’ve earned it. Come September, when the dog has to sit at the peg during a drive, they know to wait calmly and they’ll get a reward.’

Mr Randall emphasises cultivating patience and trust in the home environment first, whether or not your dog is destined for the shooting field: ‘You’re building those foundations from the start and once you have control at home, you can take it from there. Don’t let your dog barge past you through a door—ask them to sit before walking through and then call them to you. Small things like that create a well-behaved dog. It makes a huge difference. I also teach commands such as “leave” and recall around their feeding times—you couldn’t get a more positive time to teach a dog vital lessons.’

Tracy Corbin, of Corbinsbere Gundogs, a recent Gundog Trainer of the Year, agrees that mentally stimulating tasks at home form a key part of training. ‘One thing that you can do is work on the heel position,’ she advises. ‘Teach your dog to heel at your side as you walk a circle on the spot. First, sit them down and with a treat, get interest on the dog’s nose up to your side. Turn your dog, guiding them around, and ask them to sit again. Reward on that sit with the treat, before turning again and repeating.

‘Another of my favourites is the unexpected recall—if my dogs are out in the garden, I suddenly call them and they have to come and find where I am, receiving a good reward when they do. In that moment when I call, they’re not thinking about me. It teaches them to listen when I’m not right there in front of them.’ There is one more great advantage to brain games, Mrs Corbin concludes: ‘Whether you’re teaching them tricks, tasks or commands, their focus is completely on you. It’s wonderful to spend that time engaging with your dog.’ 🐾

## Mind over matter

For more brain games and training tips, try the Dogs Trust or Battersea Dogs & Cats Home (www.dogstrust.org.uk; www.battersea.org.uk)

- **Redbeards Gundogs (07711 907688; www.redbeardgundogs.co.uk)**
- **Beggarbush Gundogs (07771 903367; www.beggarbushgundogs.co.uk)**
- **Corbinsbere Gundogs (07919 484941; www.corbinsberegundogs.co.uk)**

*Getty; Alamy*

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FUTURE

# Fox-red is the new black

They're taking the shooting world by storm as the gundog of the moment, but fox-reds go back further than you might think, discovers **Katy Birchall**

Photographs by Steve Magennis and Sarah Farnsworth

WHAT'S in a colour?' Had Shakespeare been around a few centuries later and a labrador man, this surely would have been the real question troubling the two households in fair Verona. Much like the love between a Montague and a Capulet, the best labrador colour can be a controversial affair. Black remains the dominant shade in the shooting field, but the noticeable rise in popularity of a certain shade of yellow has got us asking if red could be the new black.

'The fox-red colour is really very striking,' declares Lt-Gen Sir Barney White-Spunner, former executive chairman of the Countryside Alliance. Currently the owner of two labradors, his family has kept fox-reds for years. 'People are always interested in where they've come from—they often get mistaken for Rhodesian ridgebacks, which can be a bit irritating. They're lovely dogs—very companionable and terribly patient. They just love their shooting and all of ours have had tremendous noses, which makes a huge difference.'

Sam Rickitt saw a fox-red labrador for the first time when he was out shooting in Leicestershire some six years ago. 'One of the pickers-up had one,' he remembers. 'The dog worked beautifully and was lovely to watch.' A few years later, Mr Rickitt found himself the proud owner of fox-red Bramble, a birthday gift from his wife, deputy editor of *The Field* Ali Henton.

Training Bramble with the help of Phil Garton of Fieldcrest Gundogs—'he's training me as much as the dog, if I'm honest'—Mr Rickitt is pleased to find that she isn't only a pretty face. Halfway through this past season—her first full one—she picked up 43 birds on a shoot in Derbyshire.

'She's speedy and her marking and visual acuity are very good. As a two year old, her

*Preceding pages:* **Can we get down yet?** *Left:* **Patient, with superb noses, fox-reds are prized on shoots.** *Above:* **Fox-reds will turn their paws to everything from wildfowling to fishing**

steadiness is getting there,' Mr Rickitt reports. A well-travelled dog, Bramble accompanies her master everywhere, from patiently sitting on the riverbank for salmon fishing in Scotland to taking part in a walked-up grouse day. 'She has a wonderful breadth of ability. Going out in the field with Ali and having Bramble with us just completes it—although, with those 43 birds, Bramble is going up in the pecking order.'

Guy Radford, field-trial secretary of Dove Valley Working Gundog Club, has long been a fox-red fan, but points out their one disadvantage. 'When it goes wrong, everyone knows he's mine,' he laughs. 'If you have a black labrador, you might get away with blaming someone else, but if mine runs in, I can't hide anywhere.'

Having worked labradors for 40 years, Mr Radford currently has five yellows, one of which is a fox-red, the others dark yellow, and he's keen to point out the difference. 'Because the fox-red colour is becoming popular, it can be misrepresented and a lot of dark yellows are described as fox-red. That genuine, deep chestnut-red is a beautiful colour and still fairly unusual, so generates interest. People approach me on shoots who've never seen one before. My boy often gets mistaken for a vizsla.'

Today, the fox-red may seem to be the avant-garde member of the yellow-labrador family—it's important to reiterate that fox-red is a shade of yellow labrador, not a colour in its own right—but the darker shade was, in fact, the original. The black-and-white photograph of the first recorded yellow labrador, taken in 1899, illustrates a dark-furred dog, arguably what we'd now call fox-red (*see box*).

This traditional shade of yellow labrador wasn't overshadowed until later in the 20th century, when the rare lighter hue came into fashion and the dogs became paler and paler.

> 'The fox-red may seem to be an avant-garde yellow labrador, but the darker shade was the original'

'Fashion is fickle,' states Gilly Nickols of Bedgebrook Gundogs in East Sussex. 'When I started in gundogs, most working labradors on shoots and at field trials were black, and then the yellows started to increase in popularity. I soon became wary of people wanting to use Rouble at stud because of his colour, rather than his ability, pedigree and temperament.'

Rouble, her 'first and best' fox-red labrador, came to her quite by accident, when she bumped into a breeder at the CLA Game Fair who happened to mention that she had a puppy for sale. 'He was a dog in a million,' Mrs Nickols recalls. 'When he was five, I made him up to a Field Trial ➤

A whiter shade of red: Jill Parsons's gundogs reveal the wide range of the fox-red colour

## Feeling foxy

**• In 1899, the first recorded yellow labrador was born. Named Ben of Hyde, he belonged to the kennel of Maj C. J. Radclyffe.**

• At a time when black labradors reigned supreme, George VI was known for his preference for yellows—both as gundogs and as pets—and bred them at Sandringham. There are some wonderful photos, taken in the 1920s, of the monarch and his wife with their beloved dark-yellow and fox-red dogs.

**• That a light-cream labrador was cast in the role of Lord Grantham's gundog in Downton Abbey, set in 1912, remains an unforgiveable historical inaccuracy—not only were the pale labradors not yet in existence at that time, but yellow labradors in general would have been extremely unusual gundogs.**

• Call fox-reds or dark-yellow labs 'golden' at your peril. If a yellow-lab enthusiast doesn't bite your head off, the Kennel Club (KC) might—in the early 1900s, the shade was often referred to as 'golden', but the KC ruled that 'gold' was not a colour. The breed standard states 'yellows range from light cream to red fox'.

**• Enthusiasts say wildfowling is where the fox-red comes into its own. Some say it's because the fox-red blends with its surroundings, but others point out its use as a decoy dog, resembling a fox and luring curious wildfowl.**

Champion. He slept in the kitchen that night and I kept going downstairs to tell him how brilliant he was.'

Rouble also made his mark when picking up at the Balcombe estate, owned by the Greenwood family: 'I sent him across a reservoir, up a bank, over a fence and into the edge of a wood to where I had last seen a wounded hen pheasant. Once there, he put his head down and took a line some 70–80 yards before picking the bird and returning to me with it. Mrs Greenwood was kind enough to say it was the best retrieve she'd ever seen.'

> 'I kept going downstairs to tell him how brilliant he was'

'There's nothing better than watching a fox-red labrador using all its natural hunting ability to find and pick a runner on a shoot day,' remarks Jill Parsons. After competing in working trials with weimaraners, Miss Parsons acquired her first fox-red labrador, Rocky, and 'became hooked'. Now the owner of five fox-reds and two yellows, she admits she 'may be slightly biased' but thinks the popularity of fox-reds for shooting is mostly down to their excellent working ability. This theory is echoed by gundog writer David Tomlinson, who notes that 'fox-reds tend to be from working rather than show lines, which might explain their popularity as shooting dogs'. Otherwise, he says, the labrador-coat debate is much like choosing between a red or a yellow Ferrari: 'They're both the same, except for the colour.'

The worry, Miss Parsons emphasises, is that the fashion for fox-reds will lead to their downfall. 'What's happening in recent years is that any old fox-red dog is being mated with any old fox-red bitch in the hope of producing the darkest red colour, without any real thought to temperament, working ability, health or conformation,' she explains. 'I hope the shooting world will be the custodians of the fox-red—in the past, the show world preferred the lighter yellow colour and it was the shooting fraternity that kept the fox-red alive.'

Ultimately, as the saying goes, a good dog is never a bad colour. As Sir Barney declares: 'They're simply beautiful dogs and lovely characters. Obviously, ours are much nicer than everybody else's, but I suppose everyone thinks that, don't they?' 🐾

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# Let's 'ear it for the Norfolk

These feisty little dogs, the smallest of the terrier family, are short of leg but long on personality, finds Kate Green

IT was all to do with the ears. Farmers and field sportsmen in East Anglia had long kept bouncy little brown dogs for ratting without worrying a jot about the shape of their ears, but, when dog shows resumed after the Second World War, a redoubtable lady was determined to champion the Norfolk terrier we know today.

Marion Macfie campaigned for the Kennel Club to recognise her favoured drop-eared version of the foxier-faced Norwich terrier—at the time, devotees were divided into two definite camps and things could get acrimonious when the down-turned-ear types were overlooked in the show ring. Thus this charming addition to the canine gallery was born.

As a result of Miss Macfie's efforts, the Norfolk, the smallest and one of the most delightful of the UK's myriad terrier breeds, with its appealing head, chunky, wriggling body, jaunty, quivering tail and attractive, wiry rust or black-and-tan coat, became official in 1964. The Norwich Terrier Club held an emergency meeting and a new breeders' club was formed with Miss Macfie as president. Ever since, the Norfolk has been winning the hearts of owners who love their compact, sporting little dogs.

> ‘Devotees divided into two camps and things could get acrimonious when down-turned-ear types were overlooked’

‘They're like peanuts—once you've had one, you can't stop,' says Gail Simpson, secretary of the Norfolk Terrier Club of Great Britain and the owner of father and daughter Brewster and Riva. ‘Norfolks were my first breed of dog 20 years ago, and I don't think I'll ever change. They're small and portable so you can take them anywhere and yet robust enough for an eight-mile walk.'

Linda Cooper, who acts as the club's rescue and rehoming co-ordinator, has kept them for 12 years, buying her first one as a birthday present for her husband. ‘He tells me I'm awful because I always say firmly to potential owners: “You must remember that these lovely little teddy bears are *terriers*.”

‘The biggest problem with Norfolks is when their owners treat them like babies. ➤

**True terriers and countryman's dogs, Norfolks are jaunty, fun and great ratters**

*AnimalPhotography.com/Sally Anne Thompson*

## Five reasons to have a Norfolk

• They're great fun and can't help but cheer you up.

• **They're intelligent and trainable, albeit selectively deaf when something more interesting is happening.**

• They're proper country dogs that enjoy and need proper exercise—or they will become tubby.

• **Their coats don't shed, but they will need grooming as well as hand-stripping twice a year.**

• They're extremely talented ratters.

## Five caveats about Norfolks

• **Their cuteness makes them hard to discipline, but discipline them you must.**

• Their bark is ear-shattering and, if not curbed early on, will drive you mad.

• **They're great escapologists (their colour is a good camouflage) and diggers of flowerbeds.**

• They're not city dogs, despite their neat appearance and small size, and have little road sense.

• **They're not to be trusted with rabbits, guinea pigs or chickens and don't suffer cats gladly.**

**Defender of the drop-eared: Marion Macfie, who led the campaign to register the Norfolk**

Then, they become protective and will go for people, but the moment they're in the right home, they're fine.'

As with most terrier breeds—borders, Jack Russells and cairns among them—topography and the interests of hunting men have been major influences. Norfolk, being an arable county criss-crossed by endless ditches, is rat territory and controlling the rodent population in stable yards, barns and grain stores was this terrier's speciality.

The Norfolk's roots are reputed to lie with the Cambridge undergraduates who bought some black-and-tan terriers from a 19th-century dealer called Charles 'Doggy' Lawrence in order to rid the colleges of a rat infestation. The dogs became known as 'Cantab' or 'Trumpington' terriers (after the Cambridge street on which many students lived) and were thought to contain a mix of Irish and Yorkshire terrier blood.

One of the most important sires in the Norwich/Norfolk story is Rags, a shaggy, red-coated dog and a brilliant worker given by Lawrence to Jack Cooke, master of the Norwich Staghounds. Cooke's whipper-in, Frank Jones, used Staffordshire bull terrier and Bedlington lines to give his dogs added 'drive'—killer instinct, in other words. He exported several puppies to the USA, where they were known as 'Jones' terriers.

Nowadays, the Norfolk is more keenly sought after as a pet, with puppies selling for about £1,000—Sir Jackie Stewart, Lady Victoria Hervey and Princess Beatrice are fans and Lord Stafford takes his grouse shooting. There's usually a waiting list as Norfolks don't have large litters and can only be bred from in moderation. In sad contrast, the Norwich has been placed on the Kennel Club's Vulnerable Breeds list, with fewer than 100 puppies registered annually.

'It's only rarely that I get an actual rescue Norfolk to rehome—mostly, they're dogs that have belonged to elderly people who have died or gone into hospital,' explains Mrs Cooper. 'They're easy dogs to live with, cheeky, fun and stalwart—we know one that walks miles with the ramblers. They're great characters, they're healthy and, above all, they love to be with you.' 🐾

**The ears of the Norfolk terrier (left) flop down, but the Norwich terrier's stand up**

*Norfolk Terrier Club; Fiona Osbaldstone:; Alamy*

# Can't you hear me SOS?

## Some of our treasured native dog breeds are at risk of extinction, often due to a simple lack of publicity. Do you dare to be different, asks **Victoria Marston**

OVER the last half century, we have seen many of our native breeds almost ignored, while we have concentrated on abnormally hairy, almost hairless or absurdly loose-skinned breeds from afar,' laments David Hancock in a COUNTRY LIFE article of 1987 (*'Best in the field', April 16*). Although this may be a little harsh, and it should be noted that many imported breeds have perfectly acceptable amounts of both hair and skin, it is nonetheless true that some of our native breeds are being ignored by the dog-owning public to the degree that they are in danger of disappearing entirely.

'We're so lucky to have such a variety of breeds in this country, with so many different personalities and characteristics, so the fact that some could disappear completely is concerning,' says Bill Lambert, spokesperson for the Kennel Club (KC). 'People simply forget there are so many wonderful dogs to discover, not only the popular and well-known ones, and we urge people to spend time researching the many breeds that we have in Britain and Ireland.'

When it comes to selecting a new canine companion, it is easy to be blinded by fashion (*'And they called it puppy love', February 28, 2024*) and perhaps overlook something less obvious that might better suit your lifestyle. Here, we highlight 10 dogs that have fallen from favour for various reasons—from size to appearance or loss of a traditional working role—and found themselves on the KC's list of vulnerable native breeds, but that might be the perfect fit for you.

Of course, it goes without saying that any prospective addition to the household should be thoroughly researched. Clearly, an otterhound is not a sensible choice for someone who lives in a flat and a smooth collie will soon go doolally if you don't have time to exercise it properly. With this in mind, we encourage you to go forth and be a little different.

**Dandie Dinmont terrier**

**2024 KC puppy registrations** 81

**Size** Small

**Town or country** Either

## All fine and dandie

IT is common knowledge that, if Sir Walter Scott had not published *Guy Mannering* in 1815, the history of the development of the wise, wily and workmanlike terriers from north of the Border might have been quite different,' states S. M. Lampson in COUNTRY LIFE, in a piece about the dogs with one of the oldest breed clubs in the world (*'Terrier made famous by a novel', February 13, 1964*). The article goes on to reflect that the novelist's description of the animals' training can probably be quoted by all lovers of the breed: 'I had them a' regularly entered, first wi' rottens—then wi' stots or weasels—then wi' the tods and brocks—and now they fear naething that ever cam wi' a hairy skin on 't.'

These game little terriers achieved immortality when Roxburghshire farmer James Davidson's Pepper and Mustard caught Scott's eye and he duly gave his sporting-farmer character, Dandie Dinmont, a pack of terriers named Auld Pepper, Young Pepper, Little Pepper, Auld Mustard, Young Mustard and Little Mustard. Henceforth, the dogs became known as Dandie Dinmont terriers and the accepted colours of the breed were even labelled pepper (blue/grey) and mustard (sandy/brown).

Once favoured by travellers and poachers thanks to their adeptness with rabbits, rats, foxes, otters and badgers, today's dogs are rarely worked, but their intelligent, affectionate and dignified natures make them fine companions. Throw in a pair of large, soulful eyes, a long, low and 'weasel-like' body and top it all off with the trademark silken topknot and these little Scots are hard to resist.

Opt for a Dandie Dinmont and you will find yourself in fine company: Queen Victoria, Edward VII, Agatha Christie, Sir Edwin Landseer, George Bernard Shaw and Sir Alec Guinness are all said to have kept them. When Boris Johnson was editing *The Spectator*, the office was apparently 'terrorised' by one named Laszlo.

Today, the 2nd Earl of Snowdon (known professionally as David Linley) and the 10th Duke of Buccleuch are firm fans. In 2015, the Duke—Chief of Clan Scott—even allowed the terrier to adopt the black-and-white Sir Walter Scott tartan, making it the only breed with permission to wear an official Scottish clan tartan. His family's association with Dandies goes back further still: it is now thought that today's pedigree originates with 'Old Ginger', bred from a dog caught in a trap on the 5th Duke of Buccleuch's Selkirk estate in 1839 and a bitch descended from the dogs of Scott himself. ➤

## Otterhound

**2024 KC puppy registrations** 42

**Size** Large

**Town or country** Country

### A hound of 'extraordinary sagacity'

FOR any 'Star Wars' fans with a particularly large garden and active lifestyle, it could be that the venerable otterhound is one to consider: with a humming, booming cry, some owners liken the breed's singing to the noises made by Chewbacca. With its strapping physique and shaggy coat—which can be black and blue, black and tan, grizzle and white, liver and tan, particolour, red grizzle or white and black—the dog is not dissimilar in looks, either.

This oily and water-resistant double coat, coupled with webbed feet, made the hounds invaluable in the days when otter hunting was a popular pastime of royalty. Packs were kept by British monarchs, including King John and Elizabeth I, until about 1685 and the practice of controlling otter numbers to preserve fish stocks was continued until a dramatic decline in the otter population was identified in the late 1970s, leading to a hunting ban in 1978 (Scotland followed shortly afterwards). The great pied hound Deadlock, nemesis of Tarka, was no longer a threat, but this newly unemployed status—except for those redeployed as minkhounds—didn't do the population any good. The KC gave free registration to ones from disbanded packs and the Otterhound Club was formed to promote and protect this 'most picturesque of breeds' (*'The dog in art', February 8, 1930*).

Commended in its KC breed standard as 'amiable and even tempered', the otterhound took a starring role in 1982 musical film *Annie* when six-year-old Bingo appeared as 'dumb dog' Sandy—and was reportedly fed steak or prime rib every night after filming. In the gardens of Rousham House in Oxfordshire lies another example of the breed that won't be forgotten: beneath a stone arch in Venus's Vale is buried Ringwood, 'an Otter-Hound of extraordinary Sagacity', according to the plaque bearing its lengthy epitaph.

From riverbank to orphans' embrace: the otterhound's role faded with the otter, but the breed found stardom in the 1982 film ***Annie***

Jonathan Yearsley; Alamy; Shutterstock; Getty; Sarah Farnsworth/Country Life Picture Library

**Once an essential element of the herdsman's armoury, the nimble Lancashire heeler is now happy to be a loyal and cheerful office dog**

## Lancashire heeler

**2024 KC puppy registrations** 75

**Size** Small

**Town or country** Either

### A little nip and tuck

ORIGINATING from Ormskirk in Lancashire and known as both the Lancashire heeler and the Ormskirk heeler, this small pastoral breed took the best of both its ancestors. An enchanting cross between a Welsh corgi and a Manchester terrier, the low-slung dog was once used to herd cattle, nipping harmlessly at the animals' heels (corgi), but reverting to black-and-tan—or liver-and-tan—ninja if there were any rats in need of dispatching (terrier), making it the perfect little farm hand.

A tireless, alert and energetic worker, the Lancashire heeler's decline correlated with the introduction of motorised transport, which made its traditional droving role redundant. An alternative job may have presented itself in the form of a canine Artful Dodger: it has been said that the dog should be 'small enough to fit in a poacher's pocket', presumably thanks to its rabbiting prowess.

The only surviving English heeler breed—both the Yorkshire and Norfolk examples are extinct—the little dog that once 'with a "bothy" and a knife… constituted one of a herdsman's three utter necessities' and 'had the same value as an ox' (*'Trusty and useful servant', August 4, 1983*) now appears to be making itself at home in the equestrian world. In novelist Fiona Walker's 'Comptons' series, Lancashire heeler mother-and-daughter duo Olive and Enid trot faithfully behind horse-trials organiser and Cotswolds stud owner Ronnie Ledwell. In real life, Badminton Horse Trials event director Jane Tuckwell is the proud owner of 13-year-old Missy. 'In my twenties, my landlords owned two Lancashire heelers and I said to myself, one day I will have one of those,' she remembers. 'I had completely forgotten this, but then the most extraordinary thing happened—when I lost my previous dog, I opened a breed book and it fell open on the Lancashire heeler page. The rest is history.'

Missy is loyal and easygoing, makes a great office dog and has a true zest for life combined with an enduring love of walks, but can also 'be quite opinionated, which leads to a rather high-pitched yap,' says Mrs Tuckwell. When Leicestershire owner Paul Conway's Martha won Best of Breed at Crufts last year, he described her as a 'brilliant' pet and a 'couch potato' when not in the show ring, according to *LeicestershireLive*. ➤

**Red, white and emerald: considered the original Irish setter, the athletic red-and-white breed is a dependable and biddable gundog**

## Irish red and white setter

**2024 KC puppy registrations** 49

**Size** Large

**Town or country** Either

### Saved from ‘the jaws of extinction’

IN 18th-century Ireland, there were three setter breeds, described by their coat types: the red and white, the red and the rare ‘Shower of Hail’ (with white ticks in a red coat, now believed to be extinct). The solid-red variety became popular both in the show ring and as a pet and is so emblematic of Ireland that it appears on the Bus Éireann logo—but it is, in fact, the red and white that can lay claim to being the original Irish setter.

Traditionally used by falconers to indicate the presence of game birds by sniffing them out and going into a ‘set’ or ‘freeze’, the breed is a dependable gundog that became the working animal of choice for the landed gentry—the Rossmore family of Rossmore Castle in Co Monaghan (since demolished) even had its own separate strain. It was thought that the white dog with red markings was easier to spot when it was quartering the moor, compared with a dark-red dog against the reddish-brown of heather and peat. In his book *The Irish Setter*, Col J. K. Millner states that, in the 1820s, about 15–20gns was paid for a good example of the breed—some 300 times the average weekly wage—and yet, by the first decades of the 20th century, numbers were in rapid decline.

It is Ulster cleric and former Army chaplain Revd Noble Houston who is credited with rescuing the red and white from what he called ‘the jaws of extinction’. Returning home from the First World War, he was horrified to find the original Irish setter so demoted and embarked on a careful breeding programme—including the Rossmore line—to re-establish it. The mantle was picked up in the 1940s by one Maureen Clarke (later Cuddy), who bred her own Judith Cunningham of Knockalla to one of Houston’s dogs, Jack of Glenmaquin. Happy, biddable, highly intelligent and affectionate creatures that the KC states should be ‘athletic rather than racy’, it is thought that Cuddy’s ‘Judith’ can be found in the pedigree of almost every Irish red and white setter today.

## Mastiff

**2024 KC puppy registrations** 107

**Size** Large

**Town or country** Country

### The heart of a lion

WHAT the Lion is to the Cat, the Mastiff is to the Dog,' wrote Sydenham Edwards in his *Cynographia Britannica* of 1800. This might imply a degree of ferocity, yet he continues: 'His courage does not exceed his temper and generosity, and in attachment he equals the kindest of his race. His docility is perfect… I have seen him down with his paw the Terrier or cur that has bit him, without offering further injury. In a family, he will permit the children to play with him, and suffer all their little pranks without offence.' In short, the mastiff is a big pussycat.

Devoted to its owners, the powerful breed tends to be more wary of strangers and has been used as a guard dog over many centuries—indeed, the mastiff is cloaked in a rich and sometimes unfortunate history. When the Romans arrived in 55BC, they found a huge and impressive dog in residence and later took some home to fight wild animals in the Coliseum. Variously employed as a gamekeeper's dog and as a hunter, during the reign of Henry II it was required that the mastiff should be 'lawed'—this involved removing toes from the front feet to lame and prevent them from catching game.

John Caius's *De Canibus Britannicis* of 1570 described the breed as guardian dogs keeping homes free from the fear of 'theefes, robbers, spoylers, and night wanderers'. It was more a case of guardian angel for Sir Peter or Piers Legh II, whose mastiff bitch is said to have protected him as he lay wounded at Agincourt in 1415 (Shakespeare also placed them there, writing in *Henry V*: 'That island of England breeds very valiant creatures; their mastiffs are of unmatchable courage'). The dog returned home and founded the line of Lyme mastiffs that were part of the Legh family until the early 1900s (*'Very valiant creatures', May 25, 1978*); there remains a portrait of one of their number, Lion, in the entrance hall at Lyme Park in Cheshire and another appears in the stained-glass window of the drawing room.

The two World Wars, when people were struggling to feed themselves—let alone an animal that holds the Guinness World Record for both the longest and heaviest dog ever seen—were hard on mastiff numbers in Britain. Thankfully, several had been exported to the US in happier times and some were returned here to revive the breed, which might be apricot, fawn or brindle in colour, in the 1950s. ➤

**From strength, sweetness: the mastiff was revered by the Romans and Shakespeare**

## Smooth collie

**2024 KC puppy registrations** 29

**Size** Large

**Town or country** Either

### Smooth operator

IT is never fun to be outshone by a glamorous relation, but thoughts on why the smooth collie has declined in popularity tend to come back to the idea that prospective owners are more drawn to the looks of the rough variety immortalised by Lassie (*'Taking the rough with the smooth', February 14, 2024*). 'Possibly the fact that he has no rough coat to hide any imperfections of form makes breeders disinclined to take the trouble necessary to get a good one,' suggests COUNTRY LIFE's Kennel Notes of January 22, 1910. 'Or it may be that the market is more restricted among the general public, who are led away by the taking jacket of his more widely sought-after brother.'

It can't even be claimed that the rough collie is all fur coat and no personality in comparison, as the two dogs largely share the same character traits of being friendly, happy and active breeds, descended from the working dogs of Scottish shepherds (some say that the name 'collie' came from the herding of black-faced colley sheep). In fact, until a change of KC regulations in 1994, the two could be interbred, with smooths and roughs being born in the same litter. If searching for an advantage of the smooth collie over its more hirsute counterpart, comparative ease of coat maintenance would surely be one.

The dogs—which can be blue merle, sable and white or tricoloured—were popular with Queen Victoria and her favourite, Sharp, was buried at Windsor Home Park, Berkshire. His tombstone reads: 'Sharp, the favourite and faithful Collie of Queen Victoria from 1866 to 1879.' Today, the breed would be particularly well suited to anyone with an interest in agility, flyball, heelwork to music or obedience training.

**Without the long coat of its rough cousins, the smooth collie is revealed to be an elegant, active dog, friendly and faithful**

**Once touted as the national dog of Ireland, the powerful Kerry blue terrier has conquered the show ring as it once did the farmyard**

## Kerry blue terrier

**2024 KC puppy registrations** 77

**Size** Medium

**Town or country** Either

### Black and blue and Irish all over

WHAT is the national dog of Ireland? The answer is that there isn't one—but it was arguably the Kerry blue terrier that came closest, when Irish soldier, politician and proud owner of Convict 224 Michael Collins reportedly sponsored an act of parliament to this effect in the early 1920s. Collins was killed in 1922 and there is no record of his act ever being heard by the Irish parliament, the powerful and compact terrier also known as the Irish blue remaining no more than one of the country's nine native breeds.

Its ancestry is shrouded in mystery—suggested culprits include Bedlington terriers and soft-coated wheaten terriers, as well as the somewhat surprising Irish wolfhound (might it not be a little taller, if so…?)—but what is known is that the resulting terrier strain was a keen fighter, as well as being used as a gundog, for pest control and as an all-round farm dog. COUNTRY LIFE reports that, by the 1950s, supporters had managed 'to tame the fiery spirits of their dogs and at the same time fine down and tidy up their physical appearance' compared with the 'early, quarrel-picking rapscallions' of the 1920s (*'Fighting terrier from Ireland', December 6, 1956*).

The same article laments the fact that 'he is now nearly as shaven and shorn as a poodle', although the UK Kerry Blue Terrier Association's website argues that 'even today the head trimming derives from the working aspect of the breed'. It goes on to quote breeder J. W. Cummings, who assured that 'as a watchdog, a friend, and companion… he is *par excellence*. He can be trusted with the smallest child; indeed, he seems to have a peculiar love for the latter, and his faithfulness to his master is unsurpassed'.

Born black, but changing to blue or a combination of the two after about 18 months (there were black-and-tan puppies in the early days of the breed, but these were 'disposed of'), Kerry blue terriers have seen great success in the show ring, making it to the final of Crufts an impressive nine times, winning Reserve Best in Show three times (1932, 1977 and 2003) and Best in Show in both 1979 and 2000. One dog even made headlines during the 1977 Ashes—when the hairy spectator appeared at The Oval, bowler John Lever gamely tucked it under his arm and removed it from the pitch. ➤

## Deerhound

**2024 KC puppy registrations** 146
**Size** Large
**Town or country** Country

### They're dignified and they're ancient

RECORDED in Scotland for at least 500 years, once used to control wolves and developed into a deer-coursing breed (it was originally known as the Scottish wolfdog), the deerhound is the perfect combination of 'speed, power and endurance necessary to pull down a stag', with a general bearing of 'gentle dignity', says the KC. These obedient creatures resemble rough-coated greyhounds and are closely related to Irish wolfhounds; they're slightly smaller—but you would certainly know about it if one climbed onto your lap. The males should stand a minimum of 30in at the withers and weigh in at some 45½kg.

The deerhound found itself in trouble at the start of the 19th century, when many of the big Scottish estates were split into smaller ones with a new focus on stalking and shooting, for which a tracking dog such as a collie was more suitable, according to The Deerhound Club. There came a revival of interest in the elegant animals with the Victorians, led once again by Queen Victoria herself: COUNTRY LIFE reports that 'a grand breed existed, or still exists, at Windsor, and they were highly esteemed by Prince Albert and Her Majesty', mentioning a particular bluish-fawn deerhound named Keildar, used by Albert for stalking deer at Windsor Park (*'A dog of princes and sportsmen', September 10, 1921*).

Sir Edwin Landseer captured the quiet grace of the breed in several of his works and drew Sir Walter Scott's favourite, Maida

**Beloved of wizards and Muggle royalty, the graceful deerhound is renowned for its speed**

—a gift from the Chief of Glengarry—during a visit in about 1824. 'He has drawn old Maida in particular with much spirit indeed,' said the novelist, who described deerhounds as the 'most perfect creature of Heaven' and featured them in his 'Waverley' novels. In the US, Civil War cavalry officer Gen George Custer kept the dogs. Of one, Tuck, which was killed at Little Bighorn, the Scottish Deerhound Club of America records that Custer wrote: 'Tuck regularly comes when I am writing, and lays her head on the desk, rooting up my hand with her long nose until I consent to stop and notice her.' Wizarding fans may be more familiar with the breed—which can be a variety of shades of grey, blue and brindle, with touches of white—than they think: in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Sirius Black's animagus Padfoot was played by deerhound Kilbourne Macleod.

## Field spaniel

**2024 KC puppy registrations** 73
**Size** Medium
**Town or country** Country

### Jack of all trades

LET'S be honest—let loose behind the wheel of a sports car, how many of us would probably crash it? Replace 'car' with 'spaniel' and it might be that many of the people tempted by a sporty cocker or springer would actually be better off with a slightly steadier field spaniel, asserts Jeremy Hunt (*'Minor spaniels become a major force', February 10, 2000*), noting its 'calm temperament'.

It may, therefore, follow that the dog could make a more suitable pet—although Peggy Grayson issues a word of warning in *The History and Management of the Field Spaniel*: 'People must be told how big a Field will grow, what a lot it will eat and how much more exercise it will require than a run in the park… They must be told that this is not a breed for people out at work all day.' Which boils down to the fact that you are still taking on a spaniel (or, indeed, a dog).

Described in C. Bede Maxwell's *The Truth About Sporting Dogs* as 'the jack-of-all-trades spaniel', the breed as we know it came into being when land spaniels were sectioned off into smaller dogs (cockers), bigger ones with white in their coat (springers) and larger, solid-coloured examples (fields). Now longer in the body than its relatives, the breed has been on the brink of extinction many times—something that S. M. Lampson attributes to show enthusiasts who 'took it into their heads that these dogs had to be long, low dogs. In consequence, within a few generations the sound, hard-working forefathers of all land spaniels… had come to resemble sausages with two legs at each end' (*'Can the field spaniel survive?', September 13, 1962*). It is also true that the two World Wars were as disastrous for this as for other minor breeds and by 1949, the KC studbook listed only one dog.

Happily, the field spaniel was revived by breed enthusiasts in the 1960s and returned to the active and well-balanced sporting dog we see today, mostly in liver or black, but sometimes with tan markings or in roan. The Field Spaniel Society describes it as 'a true country man', an 'avid traveller' that loves cars and 'an excellent rough shooter's dog', with a 'highly developed sense of humour'. ➤

**Out of the show ring, steady, silky-eared field spaniels are proper country dogs**

**Once believed to be part otter, the rat-tailed Irish water spaniel, a retriever known for its sense of humour, lives up to its middle name**

## Irish water spaniel

**2024 KC puppy registrations** 53
**Size** Medium
**Town or country** Country

### The not-so-ugly duckling

IF you're considering a poodle or a cross, why not break with recent tradition and get something that is often mistaken for a poodle anyway? With a liver or 'liver puce' (dark with a purple tint) curled coat that is also considered hypoallergenic (although no dog is truly so), a characterful top knot (which must not 'take the form of a wig', warns a COUNTRY LIFE article of June 15, 1935) and a skinny little appendage that aids swimming and led to the nickname 'rat-tail spaniel', this is the tallest of the spaniels.

Despite debate about the origins of the breed—suggested culprits include the French barbet, the extinct English water spaniel, the poodle and even the mythical *dobhar-chú*, a cross between a dog and an otter—it is known that today's animals are descended from Boatswain, a sire owned by breeder Justin McCarthy in the 1800s. There has also been some confusion as to the dog's purpose in life. 'When is a spaniel not a spaniel?' jokes writer David Tomlinson (*'Irish versatility', July 23, 1992*), addressing the fact that the water specialist, despite being classified as a spaniel, actually works as a retriever.

One thing that aficionados of this breed do agree on is that it makes a good family pet. Described as 'staunch and affectionate with an endearing sense of humour' by the KC—albeit aloof with strangers and slow to mature—it has been suggested that the Irish water spaniel's popularity has suffered by comparison to its more handsome spaniel counterparts. Yet it is claimed that this compact chap was once considered attractive enough to have been given to the King of France by Elizabeth I's 'spymaster' Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury, and American actor Geena Davis met her husband thanks to her Irish water spaniel bitch, which nipped him on the bottom. In an interview with *HuffPost*, Ms Davis was quick to confirm that her pet is 'very sweet and soft', if slightly possessive, and went on to fall in love with him—as did her owner. 🐾

# Can you name these other vulnerable native breeds?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

## The Kennel Club's complete vulnerable native breeds list

*Based on 2024 puppy registrations*

**Irish terrier (295)**

Bedlington terrier (291)

**Old English sheepdog (241)**

Bullmastiff (235)

**Welsh terrier (218)**

Bearded collie (209)

**English setter (185)**

Welsh springer spaniel (174)

**Miniature bull terrier (165)**

Gordon setter (165)

**Irish wolfhound (165)**

Clumber spaniel (155)

**Deerhound (146)**

Norwich terrier (140)

**Soft-coated wheaten terrier (130)**

Mastiff (107)

**Sealyham terrier (100)**

Glen of Imaal terrier (92)

**Manchester terrier (89)**

Lakeland terrier (86)

**Dandie Dinmont terrier (81)**

Cardigan Welsh corgi (81)

**Kerry blue terrier (77)**

Lancashire heeler (75)

**Field spaniel (73)**

Skye terrier (71)

**Black and tan English toy terrier (66)**

Irish water spaniel (53)

**Curly coated retriever (50)**

Irish red and white setter (49)

**Smooth fox terrier (45)**

King Charles spaniel (45)

**Otterhound (42)***

Smooth collie (29)

**Bloodhound (25)**

Sussex spaniel (24)

**Greyhound (20)***

Foxhound (6)*

**Harrier (1)***

*NB: There are many more examples of these breeds in the UK, but they are not KC registered

*Crufts, usually held in early March, hosts a Discover Dogs area, where you can meet more than 200 dog breeds in the flesh (www.crufts.org.uk; www.thekennelclub.org.uk)*

**ANSWERS** *1) Old English sheepdog; 2) Gordon setter; 3) Clumber spaniel; 4) Cardigan Welsh corgi; 5) Skye terrier; 6) Curly coated retriever; 7) King Charles spaniel; 8) Bloodhound; 9) Glen of Imaal terrier*

# COUNTRY LIFE DOGS

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# COUNTRY LIFE

# DOGS

Discover how man's best friend has shaped rural living

Sweet like chocolate
Never judge a book by its cover–or a labrador by its chocolate coat, especially now they are no longer reviled in the shooting field, says Katy Birchall
Photographs by Millie Pilkington
Everyone told me they were useless. That made me determined to prove they weren't

## Chocolate lovers

They might look soft & sweet, but chocolate labs won't melt when the going gets tough

The great gundog debate
Whether you are labrador, springer, or both or even one of all three, debate over which gundog is best has raged for centuries. Katy Birchall asks which breed works for you

## The gundog debate

Springer, cocker or labrador? Or perhaps a combination of all three is the best approach on a shoot?

Small legs, big personality
Kate MacDougall gets the lowdown on dachshunds and discovers why their tiny stature doesn't impinge on a 'bauxsage' dog's zest for life
No matter how many Instagram followers a sausage dog has, the hound gene prevails

## Daring dachshunds

What these pint-sized pooches lack in size they more than make up for with a love of life

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